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SINISTER TALES No. 36

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THIS IS THE STORY OF A STRANGE SPECTER---A VISITATION FROM OUT OF THE UNKNOWN ITSELF. SUPERNATURAL? BY ALL MEANS---BUT DON'T LOOK FOR GHASTLY GROANS, FOR SKELETON HANDS OR SHRIEKS IN THE NIGHT. LOOK RATHER FOR A TENSE AND HAIRBREADTH TALE OF THRILLING LIFE AND CHILLING DEATH---AND THE ALL-TOO-HUMAN---



GHOST of a GIRL!



ART:- PAUL REINMAN



WHERE AM I?
WHAT'S...
HAPPENED
TO ME--?



ANDY...WHERE ARE
YOU? SOMETHING'S
HAPPENED---HELP
ME---HELP
ME!

WHO IS THIS TRAGIC GHOST OF A GIRL...HOW DID SHE
COME TO BE AS WE SEE HER? LET'S DEPART FROM THIS
WEIRD SCENE, TURN BACK THE PAGES OF TIME---



---TO A LONG-FLED YEAR---TO ANOTHER GIRL--AND A BOY---

DADDY DOESN'T LIKE ME
TO COME HERE, ANDY.
GOLLY, IT MUST BE A
MILE DOWN TO THE
BOTTOM---IT SCARES
ME.

ME TOO, ELLY. LET'S GO
DOWN TO MY FATHER'S
STORE AND HAVE A
SODA.



QUITE A MATCH YOUR
SON'S MAKING FOR HIMSELF,
MR. LINDSEY. ELLY ROGERS'
FAMILY ARE THE RICHEST
FOLKS IN TOWN.

MORE
IMPORTANT,
SHE'S A NICE
KID!

WEEKS AND MONTHS TURN INTO YEARS AND KIDS GROW UP—BUT THINGS DON'T NECESSARILY CHANGE...

ELLY, HONEY—
THERE'S SOMETHING
I WANT TO TALK TO
YOU ABOUT. SOME-
THING **IMPORTANT**—

NOT HERE, ANDY. LET'S
PICK—OUR FAVORITE
SPOT.



THEIR FAVORITE SPOT—THE OLD PERGOLA ON THE CLIFF. IT NO LONGER SCARED THEM NOW—

WITH DAD RETIRED AND ME RUNNING
THE STORE, I FEEL THAT I CAN AFFORD—
WELL, TO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE.

LET'S, BECAUSE
WE'VE GOT A
FUTURE—
TOGETHER—



BUT THAT WAS BEFORE THE DARK HAND OF GRIEF AND TROUBLE INTERVENED. ELLY'S FATHER DIED SUDDENLY—

I CAN'T AFFORD
TO KEEP UP THE
BIG HOUSE, ANDY.
I'LL HAVE TO PUT
IT ON THE MARKET.

IT'S THE ONLY
SENSIBLE THING
TO DO. BUT I'LL
MISS THAT OLD
PERGOLA OF
OURS—



A CUSTOMER WASN'T HARD TO FIND—LANA FOSTER, THE BEAUTIFUL YOUNG HEIRESS, WANTED IT FOR A SUMMER HOME—

I—I HOPE
YOU'LL BE
HAPPY HERE,
MISS FOSTER.

CALL ME LANA.
I WANT YOU TO
LOOK UPON THIS
PLACE AS STILL
YOURS AND COME
ANYTIME YOU WANT.
ER—YOU TOO,
MR. LINDSEY!



YES—
ESPECIALLY
YOU, MR.
LINDSEY!



WHEN HE DIDN'T COME, SHE WASN'T DISCOURAGED. SHE WENT TO SEE HIM—

THE PLACE HAS BEEN
ALLOWED TO RUN DOWN
A BIT, AND I WANT IT TO
BE RENOVATED AS IT WAS
WHEN IT WAS AT
ITS BEST. I'D
LIKE A MAN'S VIEW-
POINT ON IT—A MAN
WHO KNEW IT AS IT
HAD BEEN.
CAN I COUNT
ON YOU—
ANDY?

WHY I'D
BE GLAD
TO HELP!



IT WAS NECESSARY THAT HE VISIT THE OLD HOUSE OFTEN—GO OVER THE PLANS WITH LANA REPEATEDLY—

ANDY DEAR, I
DON'T KNOW
WHAT I'D DO
WITHOUT YOUR
HELP.

UH—THAT'S
ALL RIGHT,
LANA. I SORT
OF LIKE
HELPING
YOU!



SHE WAS SOPHISTICATED, WORLDLY, BEAUTIFUL... HE WAS A SMALL TOWN BOY. IN NO TIME, HE WAS COMPLETELY DAZZLED, CARRIED AWAY BY HER--AND IT WASN'T HARD FOR HER TO BRING THIS ABOUT--



OH, ANDY DARLING-- IT'LL BE SO WONDERFUL WHEN WE'RE MARRIED. YOU DO LOVE ME, DON'T YOU--?

Y-YES. YOU'RE WONDERFUL, LOVELY. I---I NEVER EXPECTED ANYTHING LIKE THIS--



IN NO TIME, THE SCANDALOUS STORY HAD SWEEPED THROUGH THE TOWN. IN THE SMALL HOUSE WHERE ELLY NOW LIVED--

WE THINK IT'S A SHAME, TREATING YOU LIKE THAT, POOR ELLY--

THANK YOU, BUT I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF. IF---IF THAT'S WHAT HE WANTS, I WON'T STAND IN HIS WAY.



BUT WHILE ELLY GRIEVED IN SILENCE, LANA HAD NEVER BEEN AS HAPPY. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HER LIFE, SHE WAS REALLY IN LOVE--AND SHE WANTED TO PROVE IT--

IS IT WISE TO CHANGE YOUR WILL IN HIS FAVOR NOW? SHOULDN'T YOU WAIT UNTIL AFTER YOU'RE MARRIED?

WHY WAIT? WHEN ANYBODY FEELS ABOUT A MAN THE WAY I DO ABOUT ANDY, SHE WANTS TO DO THESE THINGS RIGHT AWAY!



BUT AS THE DAYS SPED TOWARDS THEIR WEDDING, ANDY BECAME NERVOUS, ABSTRACTED. IT WASN'T EASY FOR HIM TO SAY WHAT HE TOLD HER--

IT'S...IT'S ON MY CONSCIENCE, WHAT I'VE DONE TO ELLY. I HATE TO SAY IT, LANA, BUT ARE YOU SURE THAT WE'RE DOING THE RIGHT THING?



HER WOMAN'S WISDOM CAUTIONED AGAINST SHOWING HER TRUE FEELINGS--BUT WHEN HE HAD LEFT, THIS GIRL WHO WAS ALWAYS USED TO HAVING HER OWN WAY GAVE VENT TO HER WILD RAGE--

HE CAN'T DO THIS TO ME--HE CAN'T RUIN MY LIFE, BREAK MY HEART JUST BECAUSE OF THAT STUPID LITTLE ELLY! I HATE HER, HATE HER--



THAT NIGHT, THE WORST STORM IN MANY YEARS STRUCK THE REGION. AND THROUGH ITS DEVASTATION, LANA LAY AWAKE, SCHEMING--SCHEMING--

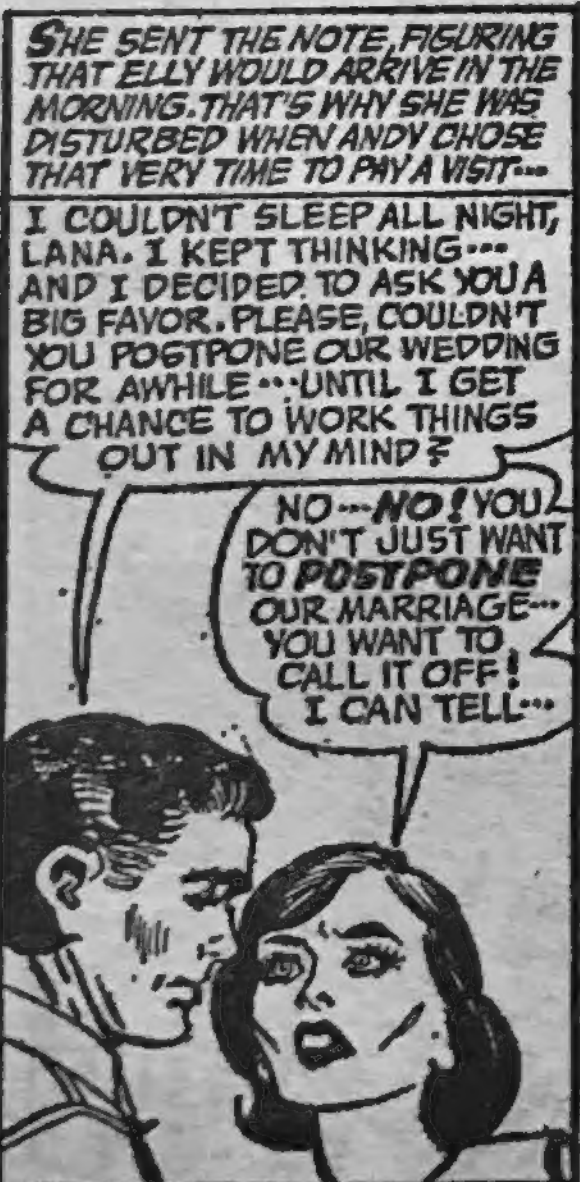
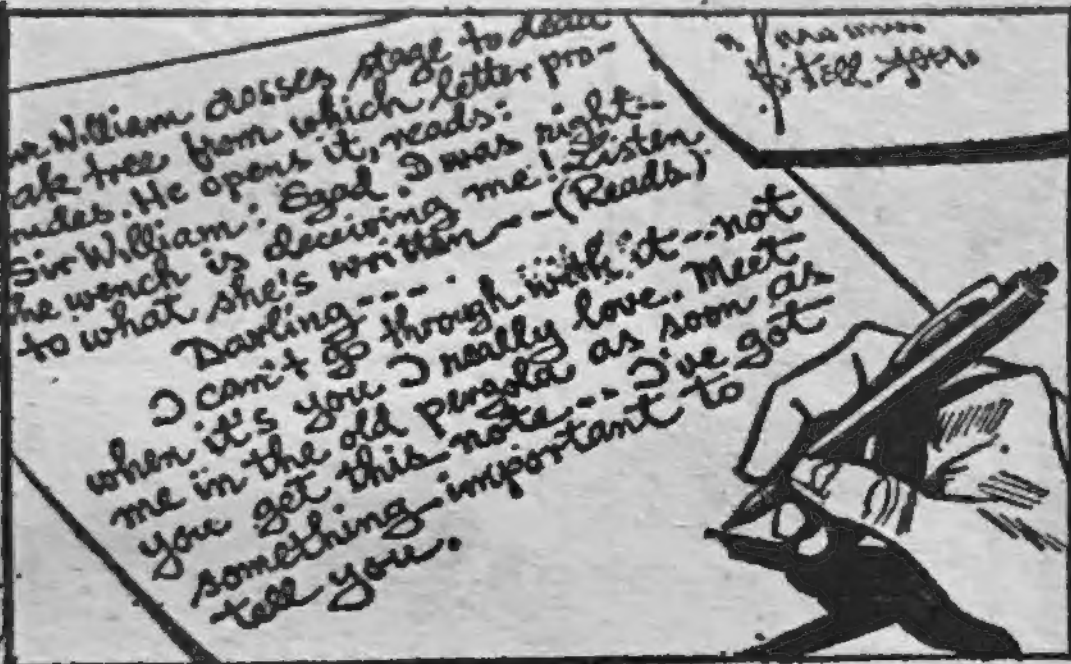
IF ONLY--IF ONLY SHE WERE OUT OF THE WAY. HE'D COME TO ME, HE'D SEE I WAS RIGHT FOR HIM! BUT HOW...HOW--

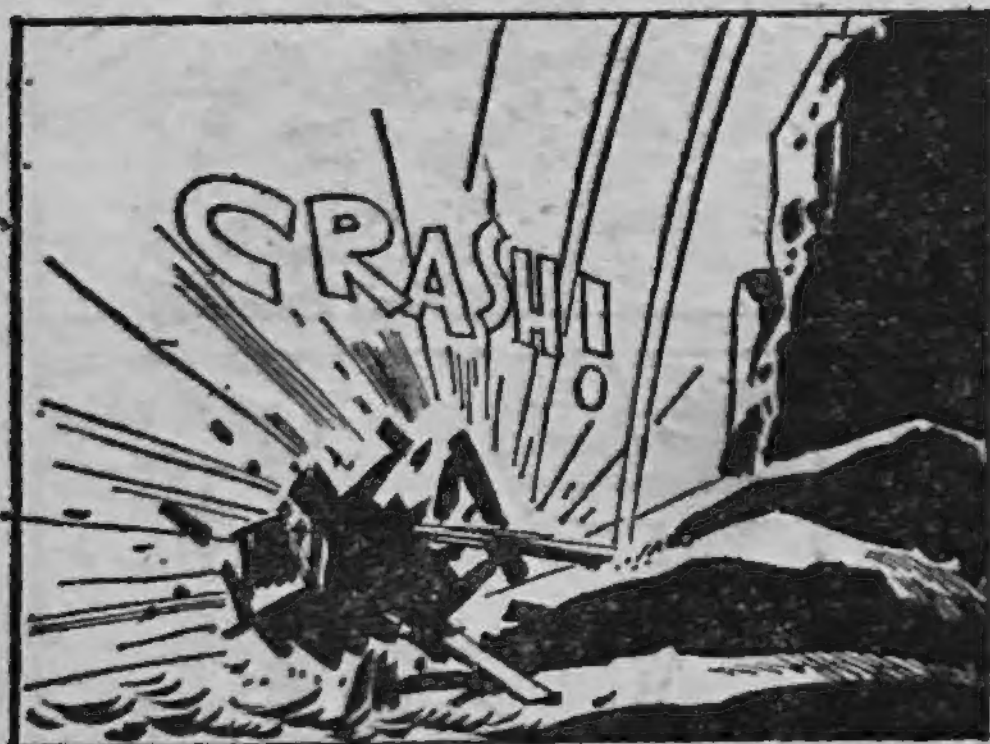


NEXT MORNING, FATE BROUGHT THE ANSWER. THE GARDENER STOPPED HER...



A CLEVER PLAN WAS PREPARED...AND SWUNG INTO ACTION...





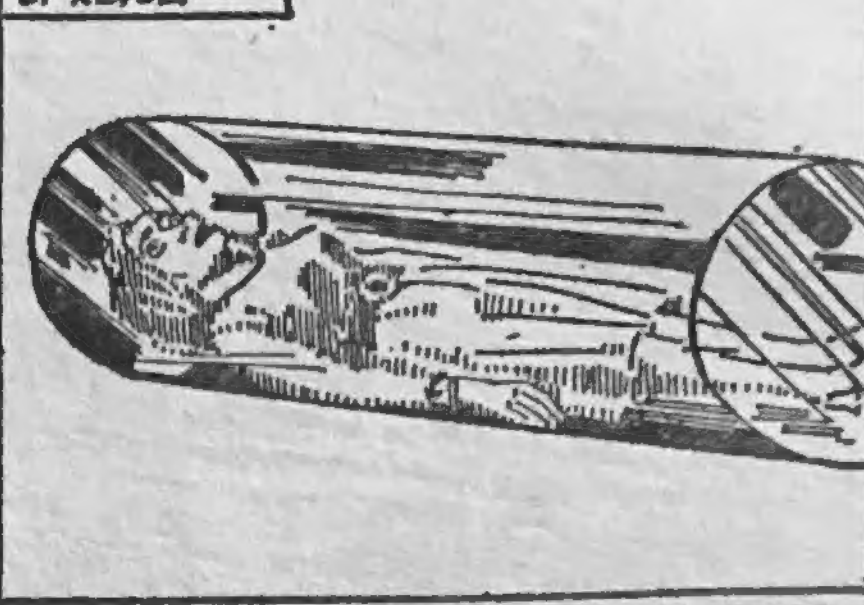


WE WISH TO HEAR THE DETAILS OF YOUR LIFE, LANA FOSTER---SO THAT YOU MAY BE REWARDED OR PUNISHED DURING THE ETERNITY YOU MUST SPEND HERE IN THE UNKNOWN!



I'LL TELL YOU NOTHING...I--I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE! SOMETHING TERRIBLE'S HAPPENING DOWN ON EARTH!

THE LAWS OF THE SUPERNATURAL ARE STRICT... STUBBORN SPIRITS ARE SUBJECT TO SEVERE PUNISHMENT. IN THE UNKNOWN, IT TAKES THE SHAPE OF IMPRISONMENT IN SPACE, UNTIL THE OFFENDER THINKS BETTER OF REVOLT---



WHERE WAS SHE? WELL...SCIENCE WOULD CALL IT THE VAN ALLEN RADIATION BELT, 500 MILES IN SPACE...AND WOULD EXPLAIN THAT IT WAS THE RADIATION RESERVOIR CONTROLLED BY THE EARTH'S MAGNETIC FIELD, AND ON JOHNSTON ISLAND IN THE PACIFIC, THINGS WERE HAPPENING WHICH THE FORCES OF THE UNKNOWN HADN'T RECKONED WITH---



WITHIN THE VAN ALLEN RADIATION BELT, A TERRIFIC ATOMIC BLAST HAD AN UNFORGEEN EFFECT---



I'M FREE...FREE! I...I CAN SEE HIM NOW...MY ANDY---



WON'T DO YOU ANY GOOD TRYING THAT DOOR--IT'S LOCKED. YOU MUST BE A STRANGER IN TOWN NOT TO KNOW THAT ANDREW LINDSEY'S OVER AT THE COURTHOUSE, BEING TRIED FOR MURDER!



OH, N-NO!



I DID WONDER WHEN MISS FRASER CAME TO ME TO CHANGE HER WILL AND LEAVE HER WHOLE FORTUNE TO LINDSEY. NOW I CAN SEE THAT HE MUST HAVE BEEN APPLYING PRESSURE TO HER... IT'S EASY TO PERSUADE A WOMAN WHO'S IN LOVE!



IF SHE HADN'T DONE IT, LANA FOSTER, MIGHT BE ALIVE TODAY. THANK YOU, SIR---

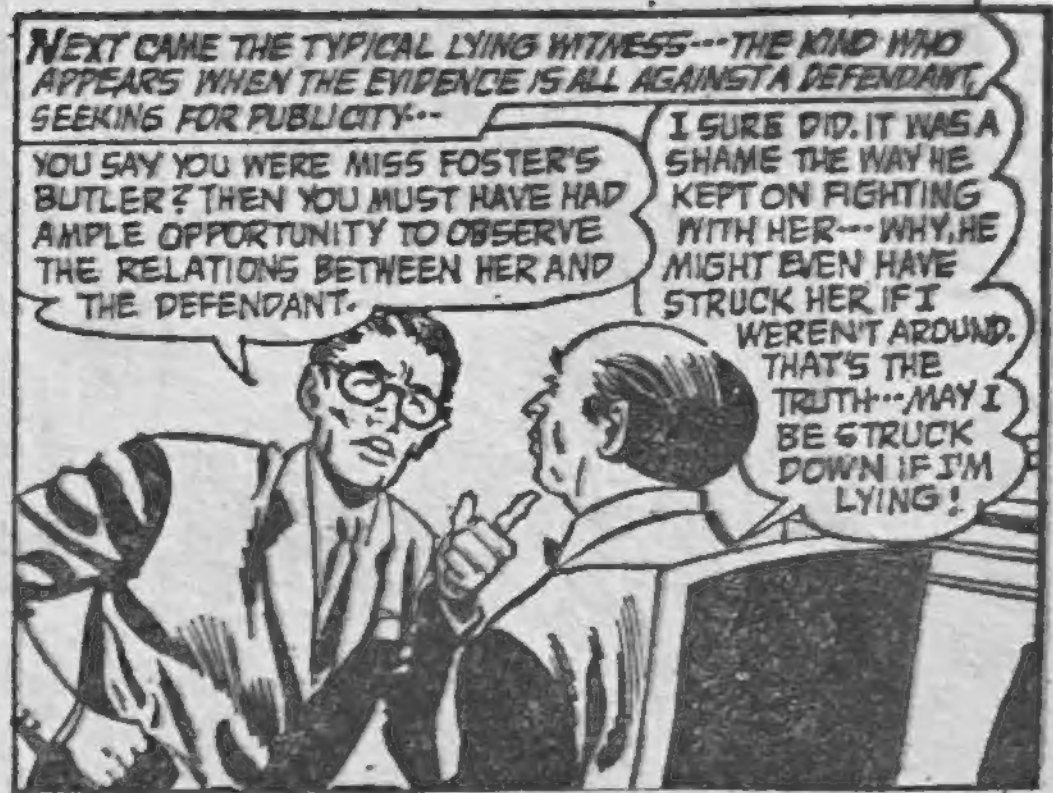




NEXT WITNESS---

YESSIR, I WAS MISS FOSTER'S GARDENER. I TOLD HER THAT THE PERGOLA WAS UNSAFE. SHE KNEW THE DANGER... SHE'D NEVER HAVE ENTERED IT OF HER OWN FREE WILL!

BUT SHE MIGHT HAVE TOLD SOMEONE ELSE ABOUT IT--A CERTAIN SOMEONE WHO PUSHED HER INTO IT AND SENT HER TO HER DEATH! YOU MAY STAND DOWN...



NEXT CAME THE TYPICAL LYING WITNESS--THE KIND WHO APPEARS WHEN THE EVIDENCE IS ALL AGAINST A DEFENDANT, SEEKING FOR PUBLICITY--

YOU SAY YOU WERE MISS FOSTER'S BUTLER? THEN YOU MUST HAVE HAD AMPLE OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE THE RELATIONS BETWEEN HER AND THE DEFENDANT.

I SURE DID. IT WAS A SHAME THE WAY HE KEPT ON FIGHTING WITH HER--WHY, HE MIGHT EVEN HAVE STRUCK HER IF I WEREN'T AROUND. THAT'S THE TRUTH--MAY I BE STRUCK DOWN IF I'M LYING!



POW!

YEEE-OHHH!

HUH? SOMETHING HIT HIM, BUT... WHAT?



THE BUTLER WAS PICKED UP AND RESTORED TO THE CHAIR TO CONTINUE HIS TESTIMONY. BUT NOW SOMETHING STRANGE HAPPENED---

THAT WAS--A LIE! THEY NEVER QUARRELED, NEVER. HE WAS--TOO FINE!



---AND SHE LOVED HIM TOO MUCH!

THAT DIDN'T SOUND LIKE HIS VOICE AT ALL--BUT LIKE A WOMAN'S! IT--IT WAS ALMOST LIKE---

I KNOW WHO YOU'RE GOING TO SAY, BUT D-DON'T TALK NONSENSE. YOU'RE--IMAGINING THINGS---

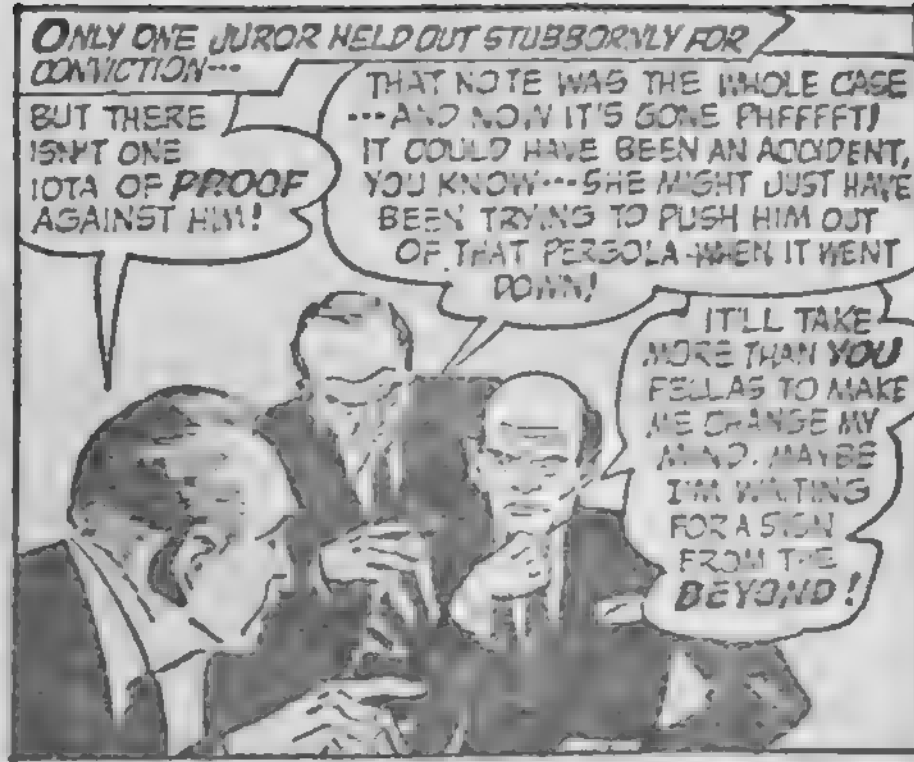


WE NOW INTRODUCE EXHIBIT A FOR THE PROSECUTION--A NOTE WRITTEN BY THE DEFENDANT DECLARING HIS LOVE FOR ANOTHER GIRL. BUT HOW COULD HE BREAK HIS ENGAGEMENT WITHOUT MISS FOSTER CHANGING HER WILL? IT WAS THEN THAT HE PLANNED HIS CRIME---

HOW CAN I DISPROVE IT? YOU ADMIT YOU WROTE IT--AND YOUR STORY OF COPYING IT FROM A PLAY SHE WROTE IS TOO THIN! AFTER ALL--WHERE IS THAT PLAY, ANDY?

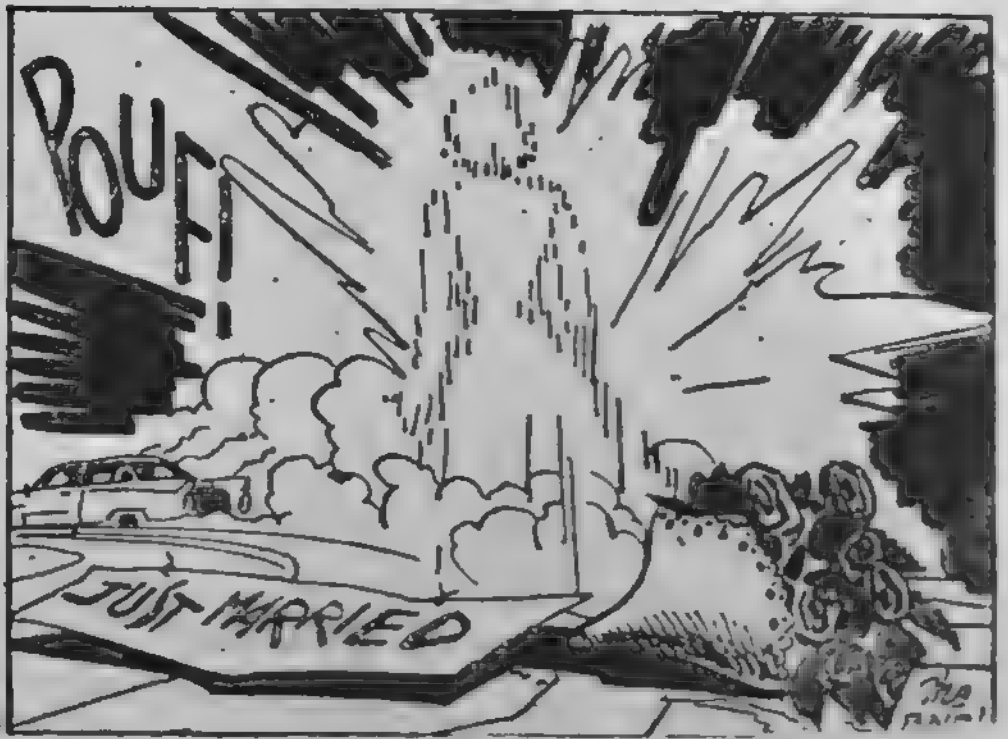
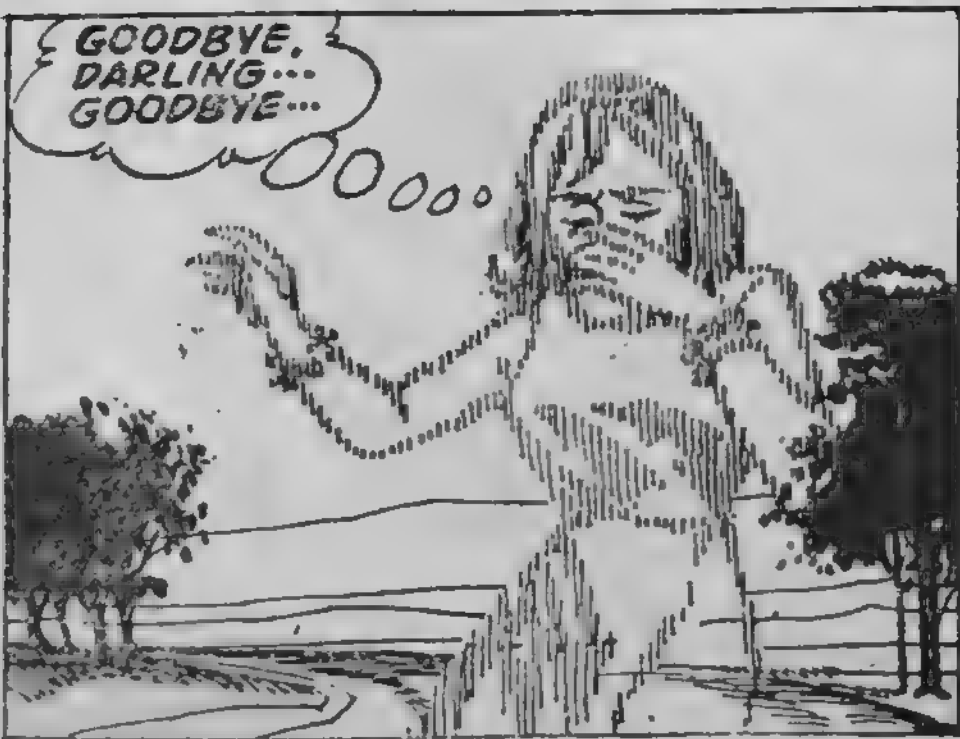


WHAT--?





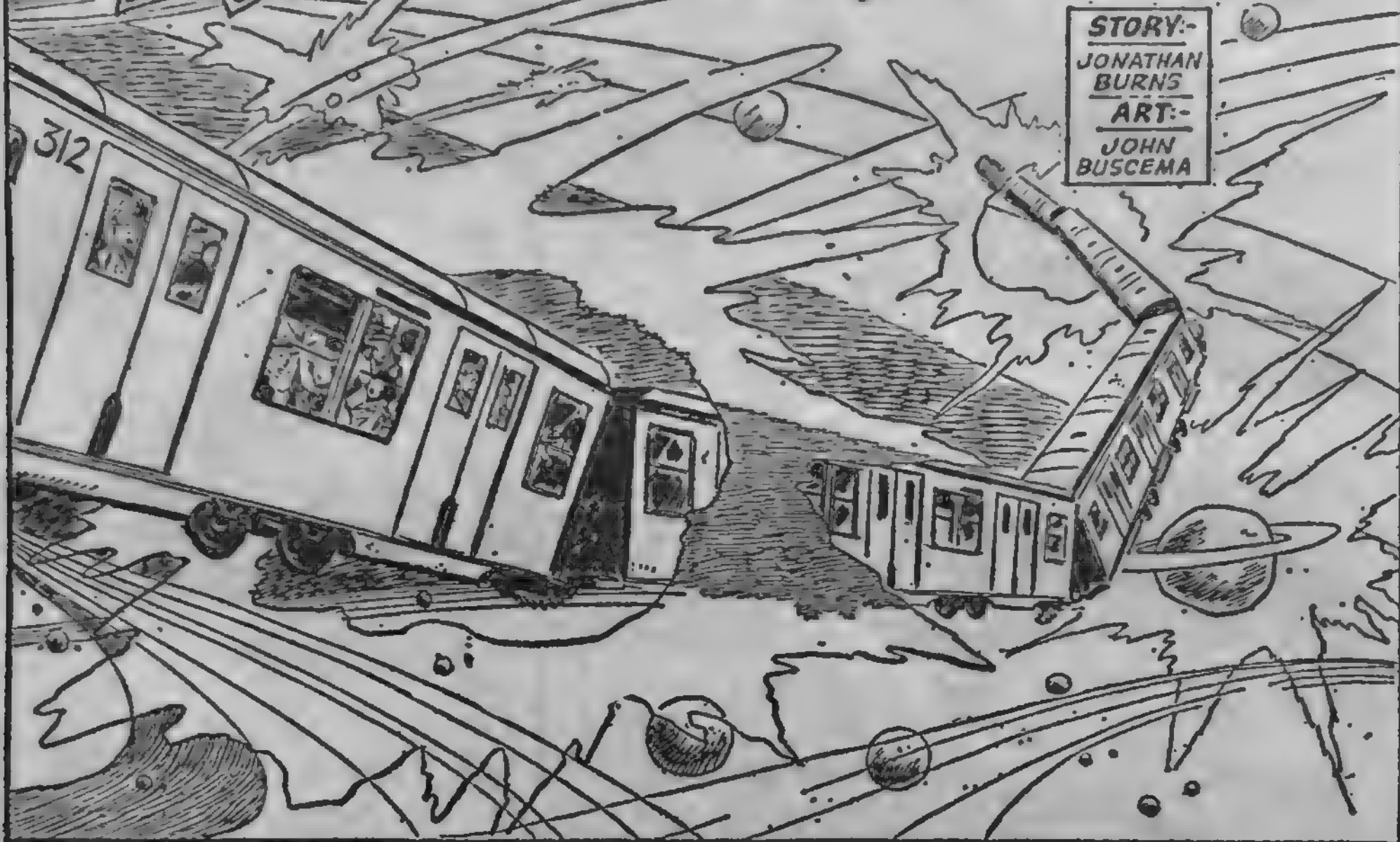




HOW COULD IT HAPPEN? HOW COULD FIVE HUNDRED PEOPLE VANISH FROM THE MIDST OF THE TEEMING MILLIONS OF A MODERN METROPOLIS? THAT WAS THE INCREDIBLE QUESTION THAT TORMENTED THE FRANTIC AUTHORITIES. FOR ONLY ONE MAN UNDERSTOOD THE FANTASTIC LAWS OF TIME AND SPACE THAT WERE AT WORK--AND THAT MAN WAS ABOARD---

The TRAIN that VANISHED!

STORY:-
JONATHAN
BURNS
ART:-
JOHN
BUSCEMA



ARNE KOVACS WAS A BRILLIANT ENGINEER WHO WORKED FOR THE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY. BUT UNFORTUNATELY, HE USED MOST OF HIS WORKING HOURS TO DELVE INTO STRANGE MATHEMATICAL THEORIES---

KOVACS, YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE CONCENTRATING ON A TRAFFIC CONTROL SYSTEM FOR THE NEW CROSSTOWN TERMINAL. BUT THESE STRANGE MATHEMATICAL FORMULAS YOU'VE SCRIBBLED ALL OVER THE PLANS--I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND THEM---

IT'S A NEW IDEA I'M WORKING ON, MR. BRUNO. IF IT WORKS OUT, IT WILL SOLVE ALL OUR TRAFFIC CONTROL PROBLEMS ON THE CITY SUBWAYS.

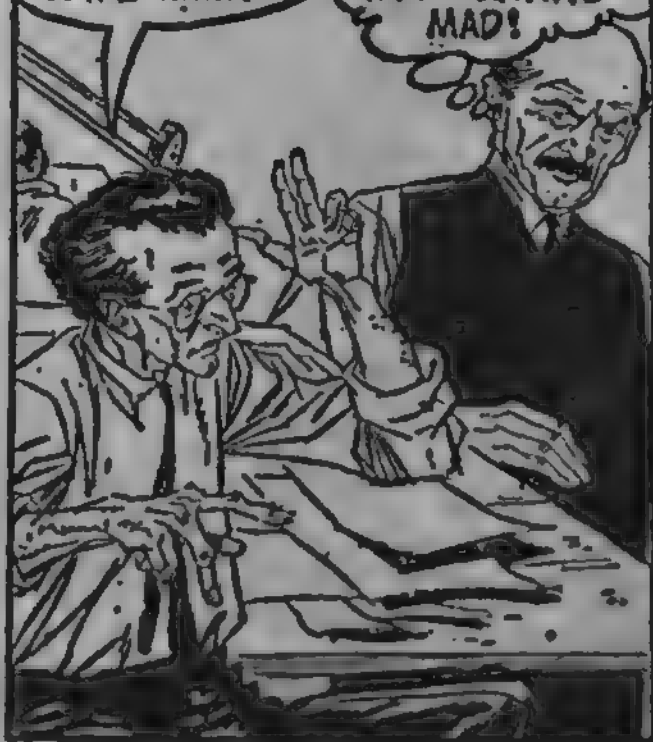
IT WORKS ON THE SAME PRINCIPLE AS THE CO-AXIAL CABLE WHICH HANDLES HUNDREDS OF MESSAGES AT THE SAME TIME. IF I CAN PERFECT MY THEORIES, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO SEND DOZENS OF TRAINS ALONG THE SAME TRACKS AT THE SAME TIME!

THE MAN'S MAD--RAVING MAD!

THIS WAS THE LAST STRAW! THE ENGINEERING SUPERVISOR HAD HIS FILL OF ARNE'S FANTASTIC THEORIES. THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING TO DO---

KOVACS, THAT DOES IT! TAKE YOUR HAT AND COAT AND LEAVE! YOU'RE FIRED!

JUST AS YOU LIKE, MR. BRUNO. I DO HOPE YOU AND THE TRANSIT AUTHORITY WON'T EVER REGRET THIS!





POOR BRUNO! HE JUST DOESN'T UNDERSTAND. NOBODY UNDERSTANDS ME! IF ONLY I HAD A WAY TO SHOW THEM THAT I'M REALLY A SERIOUS SCIENTIST, THAT MY THEORIES WILL WORK--



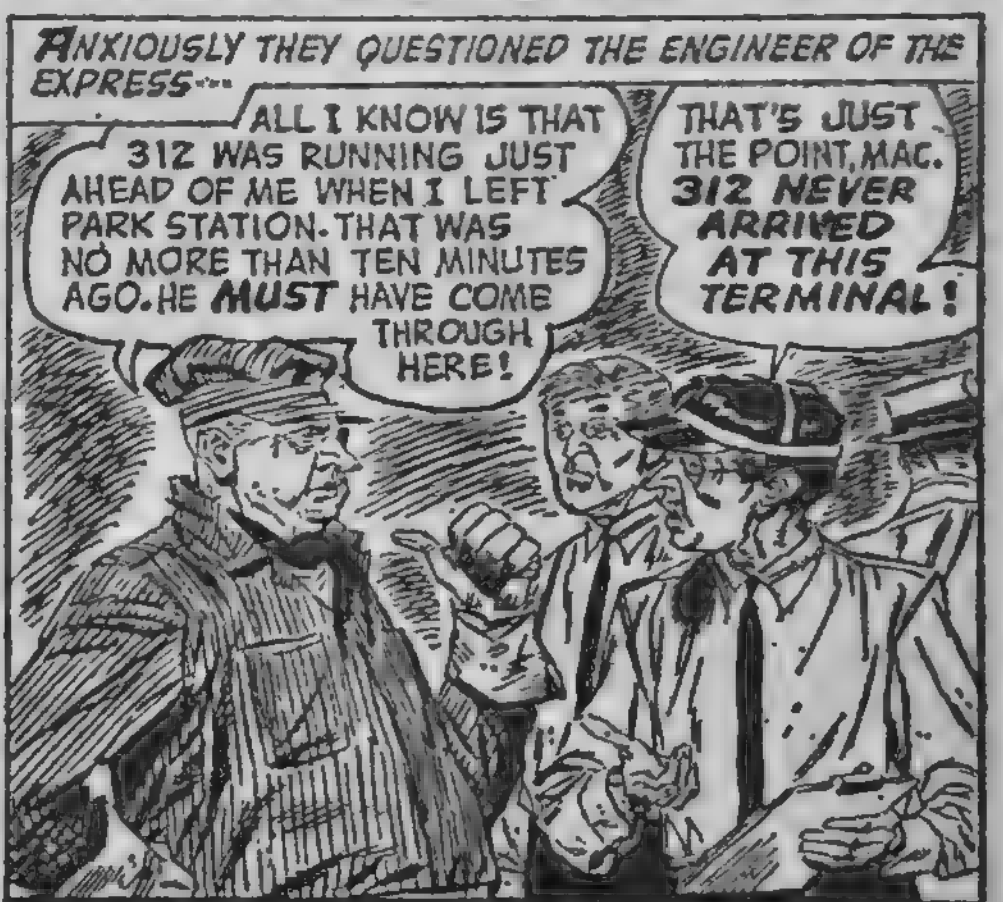
WAIT! THERE IS A WAY! I'LL SHOW THEM!



A FEW MONTHS LATER AT THE UNION CENTRAL STATION, A PUZZLED DISPATCHER WATCHED AN INCOMING SUBWAY EXPRESS--

HEY, HANK, THERE'S SOMETHING **WRONG** HERE! THAT EXPRESS PULLING-IN NOW--IT'S NUMBER 417!

BUT IT **CAN'T** BE! NUMBER 312 WAS RUNNING FIVE MINUTES AHEAD OF HIM AND IT STILL HASN'T COME IN YET!



ANXIOUSLY THEY QUESTIONED THE ENGINEER OF THE EXPRESS--

ALL I KNOW IS THAT 312 WAS RUNNING JUST AHEAD OF ME WHEN I LEFT PARK STATION. THAT WAS NO MORE THAN TEN MINUTES AGO. HE **MUST** HAVE COME THROUGH HERE!

THAT'S JUST THE POINT, MAC. 312 **NEVER** ARRIVED AT THIS TERMINAL!



A CHILL OF EERIE PREMONITION GRIPPED THEM AS THEY CHECKED THEIR CHARTS--

MAYBE 312 WAS ACCIDENTALLY SWITCHED OFF ONTO ANOTHER TRACK--?

THERE'S ONLY ONE TROUBLE WITH THAT IDEA--THERE'S NO SWITCH BETWEEN THIS TERMINAL AND THE PARK STATION, WHERE 312 WAS LAST REPORTED! THERE'S GOT TO BE ANOTHER ANSWER!

BUT THERE WAS NO OTHER ANSWER, FOR A THOROUGH CHECK SHOWED THAT THE EXPRESS TRAIN HAD VANISHED! THE OFFICIALS OF THE TRANSIT AUTHORITY WERE HASTILY SUMMONED--

DON'T BE A FOOL, MAN. A SUBWAY TRAIN LOADED WITH FIVE HUNDRED PASSENGERS JUST **CAN'T** DISAPPEAR INTO THIN AIR!

I'M SORRY, MR. BRUNO. WE'VE CHECKED WITH EVERY OTHER STATION IN THE SYSTEM. NUMBER 312 IS GONE, VANISHED, DISAPPEARED! IT'S AS IF IT NEVER EXISTED!

THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO. SWITCH ALL TRAFFIC OFF THE EXPRESS TRACK. I'M GOING INTO THE TUNNEL TO MAKE A PERSONAL INSPECTION OF THE LINE AT THE SPOT WHERE 312 WAS LAST REPORTED. THAT TRAIN **MUST** BE SOMEWHERE!



YES, THE TRAIN WAS SOMEWHERE, BUT WHERE? AT THAT MOMENT, NOT EVEN THE ENGINEER OF 312 COULD TELL...

BUT ENGINEER, WHY DOESN'T THE TRAIN STOP? WE MUST HAVE PASSED UNION CENTRAL STATION LONG AGO.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT MYSELF... WE MUST HAVE BEEN SWITCHED INTO SOME STRANGE TUNNEL. I HAVEN'T SEEN A STATION FOR THE PAST HALF HOUR!

THEN WHY DON'T YOU STOP THE TRAIN?

I CAN'T! SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO THE CONTROLS... THEY'RE LOCKED TIGHT!

THEN, SUDDENLY, UNBELIEVABLY, THE EXPRESS BURST THROUGH INTO THE LIGHT! IT WAS SUCH A LIGHT AS NONE OF THEM HAD EVER SEEN BEFORE...

THAT GLARE!

GREAT SCOTT!

I CAN'T SEE!

I'M BLINDED!

WHERE ARE WE?

THEN, AS THEIR EYES ADJUSTED TO THE BLINDING LIGHT, THEY BEHELD...

GREAT HEAVENS, LOOK!

I...I DON'T BELIEVE IT!

WE'VE ALL GONE CRAZY!

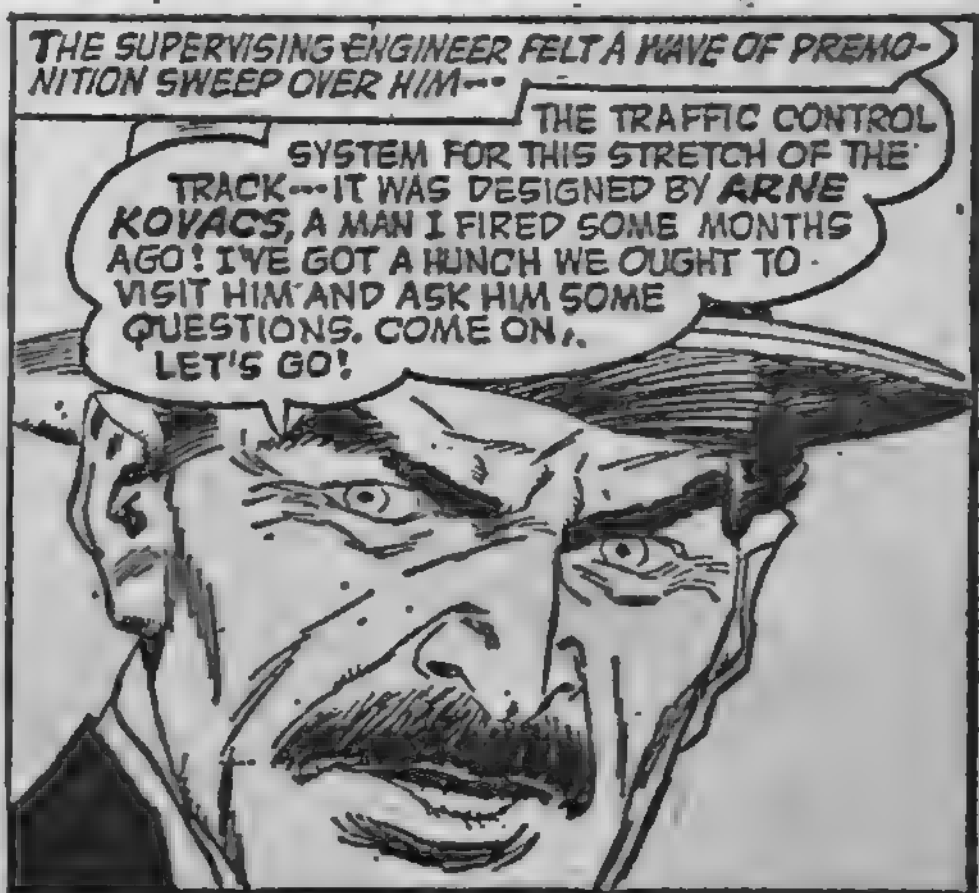
OF THE HUNDREDS OF PASSENGERS, ONLY ONE WAS WITHOUT FEAR... AND THAT ONE WAS ARNE KOVACS...

AND NOW STILL ANOTHER DIMENSION! THIS ONE LOOKS LIKE A WORLD OF SHIMMERING BUBBLES IN ALL SIZES AND SHAPES. I WONDER IF THEY ARE LIVING CREATURES? I MUST TAKE NOTES...

AND THEN CAME THE MOST INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE OF ALL! FOR AS ARNE AND THE OTHERS STARED OUT OF THE WINDOW...

GREAT SCOTT! ANOTHER TRAIN! IT'S TRAVELING IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION--

THAT'S ODD. MY CALCULATIONS NEVER PREDICTED ANYTHING LIKE THIS!



MOBIUS STRIP
---NEVER HEARD
OF IT. WHAT'S
IT USED FOR?

IT'S A DEVICE FIRST EMPLOYED
BY A NINETEENTH CENTURY
MATHEMATICIAN TO ILLUSTRATE
A PROBLEM IN GEOMETRY. SINCE
THEN, IT HAS, INSPIRED SOME
INTERESTING THEORIES IN
THE SCIENTIFIC
WORLD!



"TRY TO IMAGINE A BEING LIVING IN THE TWO-
DIMENSIONAL WORLD OF A FLAT PAPER STRIP.
HE WOULD BE LIMITED BY THE PHYSICAL
BOUNDS OF HIS WORLD. HE COULD NEVER
CONCEIVE OF ANYTHING EXISTING IN A THIRD
DIMENSION."



"NOW SUPPOSE THAT PAPER STRIP WORLD WAS
WARPED INTO THREE DIMENSIONS, TWISTED AND
BENT BACK INTO A MOBIUS STRIP..."



"NOW IF OUR TWO-DIMENSIONAL FRIEND TRAVELS
ALONG THE PLANE OF HIS WORLD, HE WOULD SOON
BE IN A WORLD OF THREE DIMENSIONS!"



"EVENTUALLY, OUR TWO-DIMENSIONAL CREATURE
WOULD BE BACK WHERE HE STARTED FROM...
BUT HE'D BE IN AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT PLANE
AND NO LONGER VISIBLE TO ANYONE IN HIS
ORIGINAL WORLD!"



THAT'S ALL VERY INTERESTING,
BUT IT'S SO MUCH SCIENTIFIC
TWADDLE TO ME. I SAY LET'S
FIND KOVACS, AND SEE IF
HE CAN GIVE US A LINE ON
WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT
TRAIN!

WAIT A
MINUTE, CAPTAIN,
THOSE MOBIUS
STRIPS... I WONDER!
THIS KOVACS WAS
AN ODD BALL, BUT HE
WAS A BRILLIANT
MATHEMATICIAN...



IT WAS THEN THAT BRUNO MADE A H.A.D. INTUITIVE GUESS AT THE INCREDIBLE TRUTH...A TRUTH THAT NONE OF THE OTHERS COULD EVEN BEGIN TO GRASP...

THAT'S IT...HE SWORE WE'D REGRET IT WHEN I FIRED HIM! KOVACS IS BEHIND THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THAT TRAIN, AND I THINK I KNOW HOW HE DID IT!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT, BUT LET'S FOLLOW HIM. HE MAY BE ON TO SOMETHING!



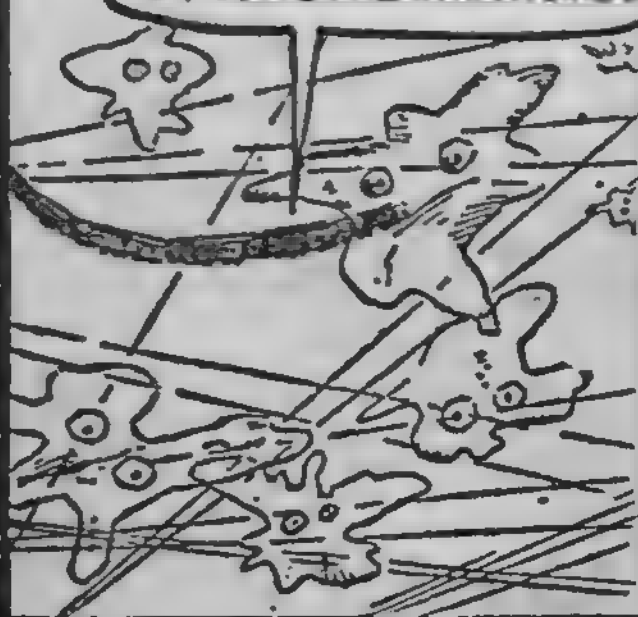
BUT MR. BRUNO, WHERE ARE WE GOING NOW?

BACK TO WHERE THAT EXPRESS TRAIN DISAPPEARED! AND HEAVEN HELP US, I HOPE WE'LL BE IN TIME!



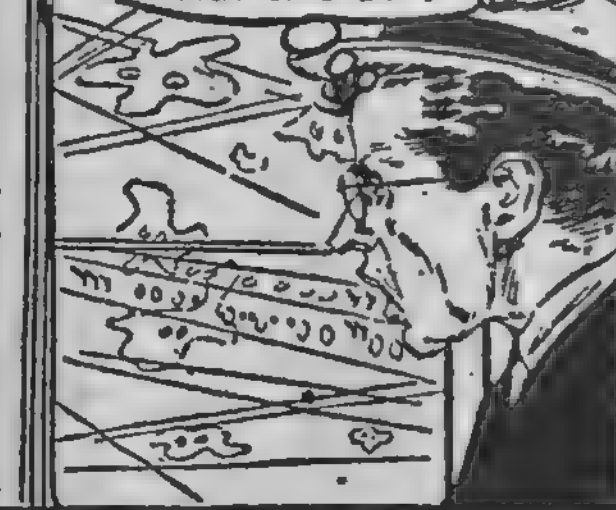
MEANWHILE, SOMEWHERE OUT IN THE VAST REACHES OF A TIME-TWISTED UNIVERSE...

GOOD GRIEF, LOOK AT THAT! A WORLD PEOPLED BY CRYSTAL CREATURES!



IN THESE STRANGE SURROUNDINGS, NO ONE WAS MORE FASCINATED THAN ARNE KOVACS...

WHAT THE...THOSE THINGS ARE WORKING SOME KIND OF INSTRUMENT BOARD. WHAT ARE THEY UP TO? WHAT SORT OF WORLD CAN THIS BE?



ENTRANCED BY THE UNKNOWN, ARNE KOVACS MADE A SWIFT DECISION...

I WONDER WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO LIVE IN THIS STRANGE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL UNIVERSE? THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT!



AND AS THE HORRIFIED PASSENGERS WATCHED AGHAST...

HEY, COME BACK! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING...YOU'LL BE KILLED...

NONSENSE... IT'S AS HARMLESS AS FALLING INTO A CLOUD OF FEATHERS!



BUT THOUGH THE TRAIN HAD LOST ONE OF ITS PASSENGERS, IT HAD UNKNOWINGLY PICKED UP ANOTHER...

POOR DEVIL, WHOEVER HE WAS! HE'S LOST... GONE FOREVER!



MEANWHILE, BACK IN OUR OWN WORLD THE INVESTIGATORS WERE HURRYING THROUGH THE TUNNEL--

LOOK CAREFULLY, MEN--IT SHOULD BE SOME KIND OF ELECTRONIC DEVICE, IF MY GUESS IS RIGHT! BUT WHATEVER IT IS, IT WILL BE WELL HIDDEN--

MAYBE THIS IS IT, MR. BRUNO--NESTED RIGHT NEXT TO THIS TRACK.

STAND ASIDE. LET ME LOOK!

AND THEN HE SPOTTED SOMETHING ELSE--THE FAINT, SHIMMERING IMAGE OF A PHANTOM TRACK SWITCHING AWAY THROUGH A PHANTOM OPENING IN THE WALL OF THE TUNNEL--

THERE IT IS, JUST AS I FIGURED. IT'S A **TUNNEL**--A TUNNEL THAT LEADS STRAIGHT OUT OF OUR THREE-DIMENSIONAL WORLD!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, MAN?

DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? KOVACS HAS DEVISED A METHOD OF SWITCHING THE TRAIN ONTO A THREE-DIMENSIONAL MOBIUS STRIP--BUT HIS STRIP WOULD TWIST INTO A WORLD OF FOUR OR MORE DIMENSIONS--A WORLD WE CAN'T EVEN CONCEIVE OF!

THEN LET'S TURN OFF THIS INFERNAL GADGET AND TRY TO SAVE THOSE PASSENGERS!

NO, DON'T TOUCH IT--WE DON'T KNOW HOW IT WORKS. YOU COULD DOOM ALL THOSE PEOPLE FOREVER!

BUT AS AN OFFICER OF THE LAW, I'VE GOT TO TRY TO SAVE THOSE PEOPLE--THEY'RE MY RESPONSIBILITY! WE'VE GOT TO GET THEM BACK TO THIS DIMENSION--

THERE'S ONE CHANCE! WHEN WE WERE IN HERE LAST, THAT NOISE WE HEARD, THAT INVISIBLE FORCE WE FELT PASSING THROUGH US--I BELIEVE THAT WAS THE MISSING TRAIN, MAKING THE FIRST CIRCLE IN ITS MOBIUS PATH!

WE COULDN'T SEE THE TRAIN BECAUSE IT WAS IN ANOTHER DIMENSION! BUT IF MY GUESS IS RIGHT, EXPRESS NUMBER 312 WILL CONTINUE TO CIRCLE IN ITS MOBIUS PATH UNTIL IT RETURNS TO OUR OWN THREE-DIMENSIONAL WORLD!

I SEE! AND THEN WE'LL HAVE OUR CHANCE TO STOP IT--IF WE CAN!

AND THEN SUDDENLY THEY HEARD IT,
THE FIRST FAINT RUMBLE OF A
SPEEDING TRAIN...

HERE IT COMES.
THAT'S NUMBER
312! SHE'S GOING
TO BE SOLID
WHEN SHE COMES
BACK INTO THIS
DIMENSION
NOW!

I CAN'T SEE
IT. THERE'S
NOTHING
IN THE
TUNNEL
AHEAD.

BUT IT WAS THERE, BURSTING OUT
OF A STRANGE WORLD...

ROAAARRR!

IT'S COMING
TOWARD US! WE'VE
GOT TO GET OUT
OF ITS WAY!

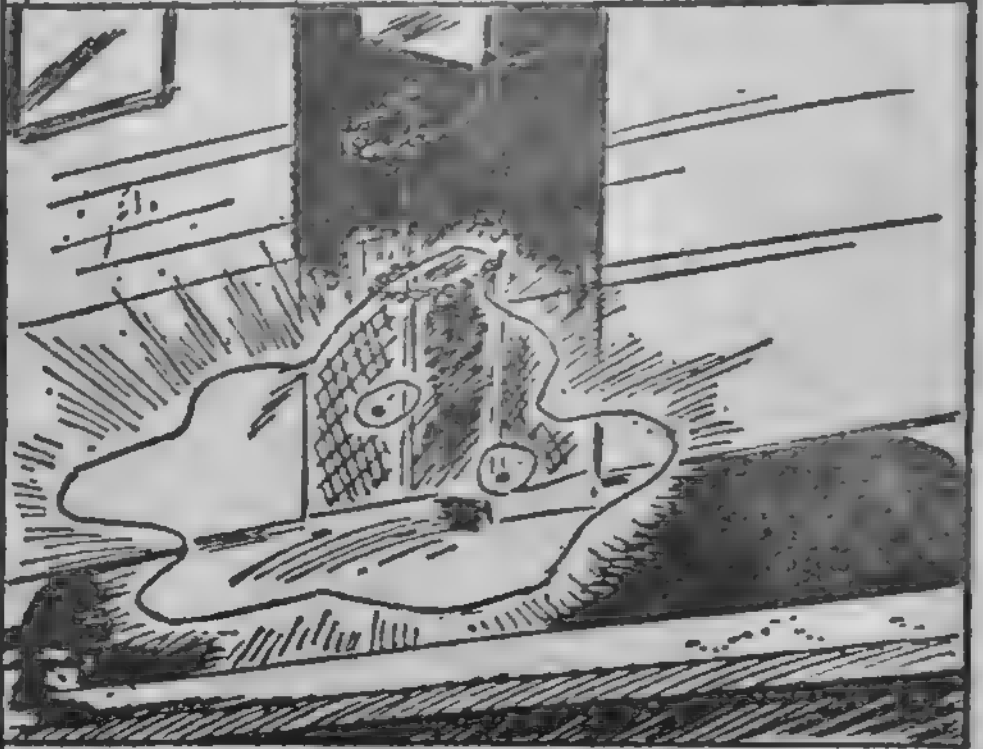
BUT HOW?
THERE'S NOT
ENOUGH ROOM
AT THE SIDE OF
THE TUNNEL FOR
ALL OF US!



RUN!
RUN!

WE
HAVEN'T A
CHANCE!

BUT AT THAT VERY MOMENT A FRAIL, CRYSTALLINE
CREATURE SLIPPED DOWNWARD ALONG THE SIDE
OF THE TRAIN TOWARD THE THIRD RAIL BELOW...



AND THEN SUDDENLY A FRIGHTENING GLARE...
AND THE TUNNEL WAS ECHOING TO THE SCREECH
OF AUTOMATIC BRAKES!



THE TRAIN STOPPED!
SOMETHING MUST HAVE
SHORT-CIRCUITED THE
THIRD RAIL!

WHATEVER
IT WAS, IT
SAVED OUR
LIVES!



EAGERLY THEY CLIMBED ABOARD THE TRAIN. THE PASSENGERS WERE HYSTERICAL WITH RELIEF...

IT'S ALL OVER, FOLKS. YOU'RE SAFE, ALL OF YOU!

OH, YOU DON'T KNOW HOW WONDERFUL IT IS TO BE BACK!

WE LOST ONE PASSENGER, SIR--A TALL, THIN MAN WITH GLASSES. HE JUMPED FROM THE TRAIN SOMEWHERE BACK THERE.

TALL, THIN AND WEARING GLASSES? I WONDER IF IT COULD HAVE BEEN KOVACS?

IT WAS OVER, THE WHOLE STRANGE EXPERIENCE. BUT TO SOME IT WAS ALL TOO INCREDIBLE FOR REALITY...

FRANKLY, I'M BEGINNING TO THINK THAT NONE OF IT EVER HAPPENED! MAYBE IT WAS ALL AN ILLUSION!

A MASS ILLUSION... THAT'S IT! CASES LIKE THAT HAVE BEEN KNOWN!

ILLUSION OR NOT, THE TRAIN WOULD HAVE DESTROYED US ALL IF NOT FOR THAT SHORT CIRCUIT. WE'D BETTER GO SEE WHAT CAUSED IT.

YES, MR. BRUNO.

AND THEN THEY SAW IT--THE REMAINS OF THAT CRYSTALLINE CREATURE DRAPED ACROSS THE THIRD RAIL...

DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?

WHAT IS IT?

THEY NEVER DID FIND OUT, FOR SLOWLY THE CRYSTAL BEING CRUMBLING INTO DUST, DUST THAT SEEMED TO MELT INTO THIN AIR...

IT'S GONE, WHATEVER IT WAS!

AND KOVACS IS GONE TOO, THE GREATEST MATHEMATICAL GENIUS THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN! WHO KNOWS IF OUR RACE WILL EVER AGAIN DISCOVER THE SECRETS THAT HE TOOK WITH HIM?

The LITTLE MAN who wasn't THERE!



IT WAS AT THE OUTDOOR EXHIBIT ON THE SQUARE THAT CAMERON LANE SPOTTED HIM - A PITIFULLY SHRUNKEN AND HALF-STARVED FIGURE LOST AMONG HIS DUNGAREE-CLAD COLLEAGUES --

PLEASE, SIR, WOULD YOU BUY MY PAINTING? ALL I ASK IS FIVE DOLLARS! I NEED THE MONEY SO BADLY--



HE WAS A PITIFUL SIGHT, SO OUT OF THE KINDNESS OF HIS HEART, CAMERON BOUGHT THE PAINTING --

WELL, I DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS ABSTRACT ART VERY WELL, BUT HERE'S THE FIVE DOLLARS ANYHOW.

THANK YOU, SIR. YOU'LL NEVER REGRET IT! NEVER!



IT WAS TWO DAYS LATER THAT A VISITING FRIEND, AN ART DEALER, NOTICED THE CANVAS IN LANE'S STUDY--

CAMERON, MY BOY, YOUR TASTE IS IMPROVING. WHERE EVER DID YOU FIND THIS MAGNIFICENT RAVAGNE PAINTING?

OH, DO YOU KNOW THE ARTIST? I BOUGHT THAT FROM HIM TWO DAYS AGO AT THE OUTDOOR EXHIBIT DOWNTOWN. POOR FELLOW WAS HALF-STARVED!



BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE - RAVAGNE'S BEEN DEAD TWENTY-FIVE YEARS! HE DIED OF STARVATION--HIS PAINTINGS ARE WORTH A FORTUNE TODAY!

BUT-BUT I SAW THE MAN WITH MY OWN EYES! THIN, DRIED-UP SHELL

OF A MAN WITH A VANDYKE BEARD AND A BERET. COME ON DOWNTOWN AND I'LL SHOW YOU!



THEY HASTENED TO THE EXHIBIT, BUT THERE --

FROM YOUR DESCRIPTION THAT ARTIST COULD ONLY HAVE BEEN THE IMMORTAL RAVAGNE--BUT WHERE IS HE NOW?

I TELL YOU I SAW HIM HERE--SPOKE TO HIM, BOUGHT THAT PAINTING FROM HIM!



IT'S YEARS SINCE, NOW, LANE'S CANVAS HAS BEEN DECLARED A GENUINE RAVAGNE--A MASTERPIECE WORTH A FORTUNE --

WELL, HE SAID I'D NEVER REGRET BUYING IT--AND I GUESS I HAVEN'T!



FOR CENTURIES MEN HAD DREAMED OF FINDING THE MYTHICAL GOLDEN CITY OF THE DESERT... A KINGDOM RICH BEYOND IMAGINING! BUT WHEN SLIP GERDEN AND THE CACTUS KID ENTERED THE GOLDEN PORTALS AT LAST, THEY FOUND THEIR VISION OF UNTOLD WEALTH HAD BECOME A NIGHTMARE IN...

The PHANTOM CITY!

STORY:-
GREGG
OLIVETTI
ART:-
OGDEN
WHITNEY



DEATH VALLEY SAM WAS A GRIZZLED OLD PROSPECTOR WHO'D SPENT A LIFETIME HUNTING FRUITLESSLY FOR GOLD. BUT AMONG THE DESERT WANDERERS, HIS KINDLINESS WAS KNOWN WIDELY--

WE WERE TOLD WE WOULD FIND FOOD AND DRINK IN YOUR CAMP.

WELL, I'VE JUST GOT A FEW SLICES OF BACON AND HALF A CANTEEN OF WATER, BUT I'LL BE GLAD TO SHARE IT WITH YOU!

VISITORS TO OLD SAM'S CAMP WERE ALWAYS SURE TO BE ASKED THE SAME QUESTION, BUT THE ANSWER WAS ALWAYS THE SAME--

YOU SURE YOU NEVER HEARD OF A GOLDEN CITY OUT HERE IN THE DESERT SOMEWHERE?

I HAVE HEARD OF SUCH A LEGEND, OLD MAN, BUT IT IS ONLY A TALE WE TELL OUR CHILDREN.

SAM'S OBSESSION WITH THE OLD LEGEND MADE HIM THE LAUGHING STOCK OF VINEGAR FLATS--

BUT I TELL YOU THE STORIES ARE TRUE! MEN HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR THE GOLDEN CITY OF CIBOLA FOR CENTURIES! EVEN COLUMBUS SEARCHED FOR IT-- IT MUST BE SOMEWHERE OUT THERE!

LISTEN TO HIM RAVE. HA, HA, HA!



BUT THE TWO MEN WHO TORMENTED HIM MOST WERE SLIP GERDEN AND HIS PARTNER, THE CACTUS KID--

ON YOUR WAY TO FIND THE GOLDEN CITY, SAM? HAW, HAW!

YOU TWO CAN LAUGH AT ME, BUT I'LL FIND IT IF IT TAKES ME A LIFETIME!



AND THEN ONE DAY IT HAPPENED! DEATH VALLEY SAM RETURNED FROM HIS WANDERINGS, HIS MULE LOADED DOWN WITH RICHES--

GOLD! GOLD! I FOUND IT-- FOUND IT AT LAST!

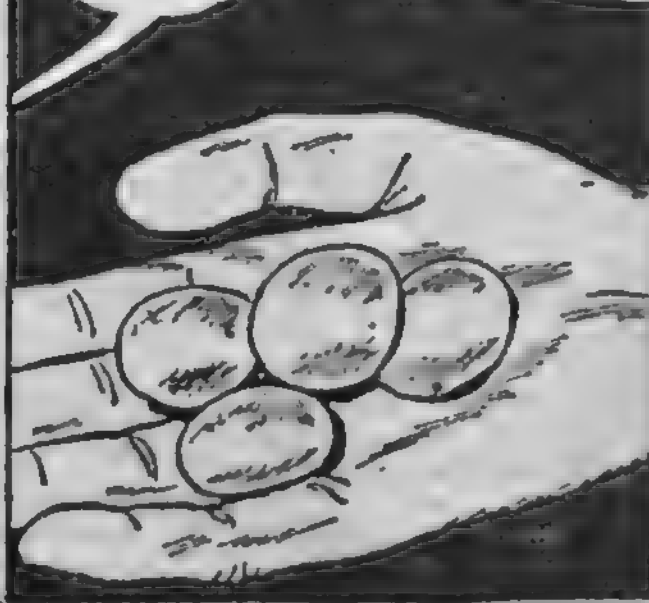


ALL THE GOLD A MAN COULD DREAM OF--I'VE GOT A WHOLE MULE-LOAD OF IT!

GREAT DAY! LOOK AT THOSE NUGGETS!

NEVER SAW NUGGETS SHAPED LIKE THAT IN ALL MY BORN DAYS!

CLEAN AND POLISHED--WHY, THEY COULD ALMOST BE MINTED GOLD!



SUSPICIOUS, THEY PROBED THE OLD MAN WITH QUESTIONS--

SAM, YOU'RE NOT FOOING US! YOU FOUND A HIDDEN TREASURE SOMEWHERE. COME ON, WHERE IS IT?

I'LL TELL YOU NOTHING! FOR THIRTY YEARS, THIS TOWN'S BEEN MAKING SPORT OF ME, BUT NOW IT'S MY TIME TO LAUGH!



ON THE EDGE OF THE CROWD, SLIP GERDEN AND THE CACTUS KID WERE WATCHING WITH GREEDY EYES--

OF ALL THE FOOL LUCK! NEVER THOUGHT THAT OLD ZANY WOULD MAKE A STRIKE LIKE THAT!

SEEMS A SHAME TO WASTE ALL THAT GOLD ON A HALF-WIT LIKE HIM, DOESN'T IT, SLIP?



YOU'RE RIGHT, KID. I THINK WE OUGHT TO FOLLOW THE OLD CODGER THE NEXT TIME HE LEAVES TOWN.

WITH A BREAK WE COULD FIND OUT WHERE ALL THAT GOLD COMES FROM!



IT WAS A WEEK LATER THAT OLD SAM SLIPPED OUT INTO THE DESERT. BUT AT HIS HEELS...

WE'LL HAVE TO KEEP OUR DISTANCE, KID. WE DON'T WANT THE OLD MAN TO KNOW WE'RE FOLLOWING HIM.



DAY AFTER DAY THEY TRAILED HIM THROUGH THE BROILING HEAT OF THE DESERT SUN...

I TELL YOU HE KNOWS WE'RE FOLLOWING HIM. HE'S LEADING US ON A WILD GOOSE CHASE.

YOU COULD BE RIGHT. HE'S CRISS-CROSSED THIS AREA FOR THREE DAYS. BUT HASN'T DUG HIS PICK INTO THE GROUND ANYWHERE.



THEN...SUDDENLY...

LOOK AT THAT MIRAGE, SLIP. IT LOOKS LIKE A BEAUTIFUL CITY, DOESN'T IT?

THIS HEAT SURE PLAYS FUNNY TRICKS ON THE EYES...LOOK AT OLD SAM! HE'S HEADING RIGHT FOR IT...PROBABLY THINKS HE'S GOING TO FIND GOLD THERE.



AND THEN, BEFORE THEIR VERY EYES, THE OLD MAN AND HIS MULE SEEMED TO DISAPPEAR INTO THE RIPPLING WAVES OF THE VISION...

DID YOU SEE THAT, KID? HE WALKED RIGHT INTO IT...AND VANISHED!

QUICK! LET'S RIDE DOWN THERE...I WANT TO GET A CLOSER LOOK AT THAT MIRAGE!

BUT WHEN THEY ARRIVED AT THE FLOOR OF THE VALLEY...

THE MIRAGE...IT'S GONE...AND SO IS SAM!

I TELL YOU HE MUST BE AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE! HE CAN'T JUST DISAPPEAR INTO THIN AIR. WE'LL TRAIL HIM!





TRAIL HIM?
NOW? LOOK
AT THESE
FOOTPRINTS---

GREAT DAY! IT'S
JUST AS IF THEY
MELTED AWAY
---VANISHED!



WE MUST
HAVE BEEN
---SEEING
THINGS---

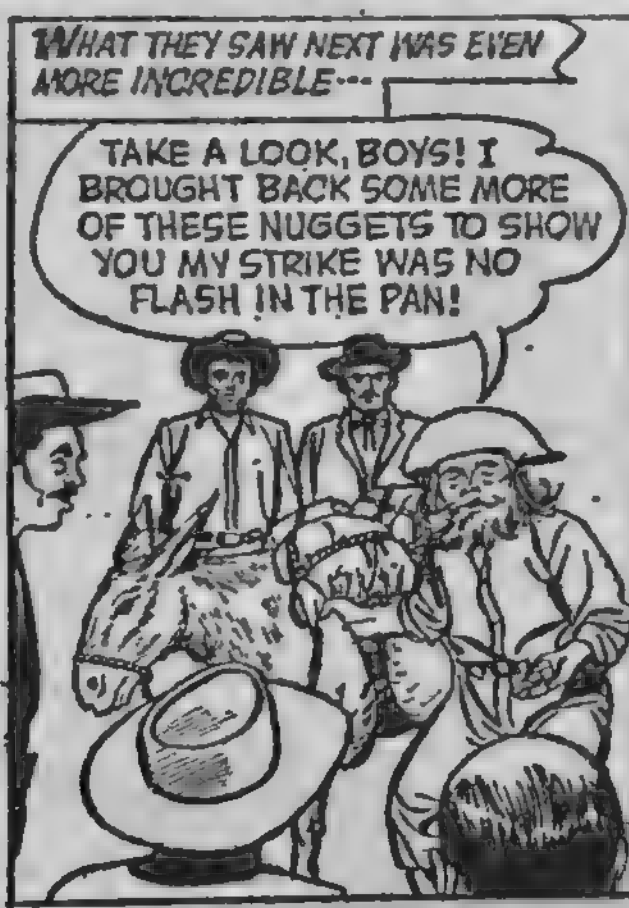
YEH! WE'VE
BEEN OUT IN THIS
DESERT TOO LONG.
COME ON, WE'RE
RIDING BACK TO
VINEGAR
FLATS!



THEY ARRIVED AT THE DESERT
TOWN---IN TIME TO SEE A DUSTY
FIGURE PRECEDING THEM DOWN
MAIN STREET---

SKIP, LOOK!
AM I GOING
CRAZY OR IS
THAT **DEATH**
VALLEY
SAM?

IT **CAN'T** BE!
HOW COULD HE
BEAT US BACK
TO TOWN---
DRAGGING
THAT OLD
BURRO BEHIND
HIM?



WHAT THEY SAW NEXT WAS EVEN
MORE INCREDIBLE---

TAKE A LOOK, BOYS! I
BROUGHT BACK SOME MORE
OF THESE NUGGETS TO SHOW
YOU MY STRIKE WAS NO
FLASH IN THE PAN!



BUT WHEN DID HE FIND TIME TO DIG
UP ALL THAT GOLD? AND WHERE DID
HE HAVE IT HIDDEN?

SLIP, I DON'T KNOW HOW
HE DID IT, BUT I'M GUESSING
THAT OLD SCARECROW MADE
FOOLS OF US!



BUT HE'S TRICKED
US FOR THE LAST TIME.
THAT OLD DESERT RAT IS
GOING TO **TELL** US WHERE
HE GOT THE GOLD!

RIGHT! WE'LL SEE
HE MAKES THINGS
EASY FOR US!



FOR TWO DAYS THEY KEPT CLOSE WATCH ON THE OLD
PROSPECTOR. THEN, LATE ONE NIGHT, THEY SAW THEIR
CHANCE---

THERE HE
GOES INTO THAT ALLEY
BEHIND THE LIVERY STABLE.
PROBABLY GOING TO PICK
UP HIS MULE AND HEAD
OUT INTO THE
DESERT.

WE'VE GOT TO
QUESTION HIM
BEFORE HE GETS
AWAY, SLIP. IT'S
NOW OR NEVER!

IN THE EERIE DARKNESS, OLD SAM HEARD THE STEALTHY FOOTFALLS BEHIND HIM...

WHO'S BACK THERE? WHO'S FOLLOWING ME?



HE'S RUNNING FOR IT! GRAB HIM, SLIP!



BUT THE SUDDEN SURGE OF FEAR WAS TOO MUCH FOR THE OLD MAN. AND IN THE NEXT INSTANT...

MY HEART!



THEY SAW OPPORTUNITY SLIPPING THROUGH THEIR GREEDY FINGERS. FRANTIC WITH AVARICE, THEY SEIZED THE OLD MAN...

HEY...SOMETHIN'S HAPPENED TO HIM! LOOKS LIKE HE'S CHECKIN' OUT...

BUT HE CANT...NOT WITHOUT TELLING US WHERE HE GOT THAT GOLD!



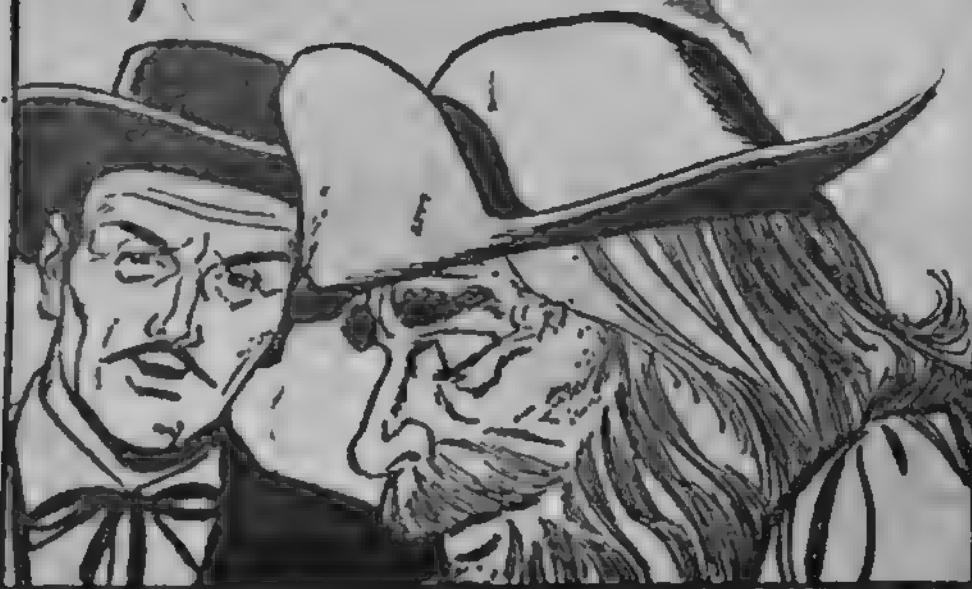
IN HIS DYING MOMENTS, A GLINT OF IRONIC HUMOR LIT THE OLD MAN'S EYES...

ALL RIGHT...GASP! ...I'LL TELL YOU! I FOUND IT...THE GOLDEN CITY OF CIBOLA...A FABULOUS KINGDOM RULED BY AN INDIAN PRINCE, EL DORADO...THE GOLDEN ONE!



SO YOU FOUND IT, EH? ALL RIGHT, HOW DO YOU GET THERE? WHERE'S THE MAP?

NO MAP...MIRAGE ...YOU GO INTO MIRAGE AND THERE...



WALK INTO THE MIRAGE, EH? HE'S TRYING TO MAKE FOOLS OUT OF US AGAIN!

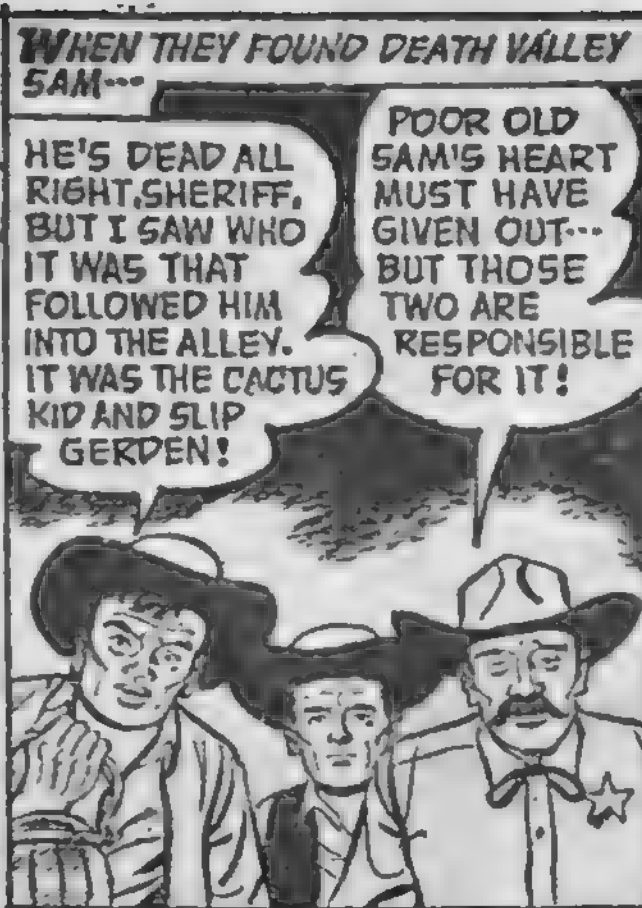
IT'S TOO LATE, KID. HE'S FINISHED!





LET'S
MAKE
TRACKS!
SOMEONE'S
COMING!

IN A SECOND---I
WANT TO PICK UP
THESE GOLD
NUGGETS THE
OLD MAN DROPPED.
NO SENSE WAST-
ING THEM!



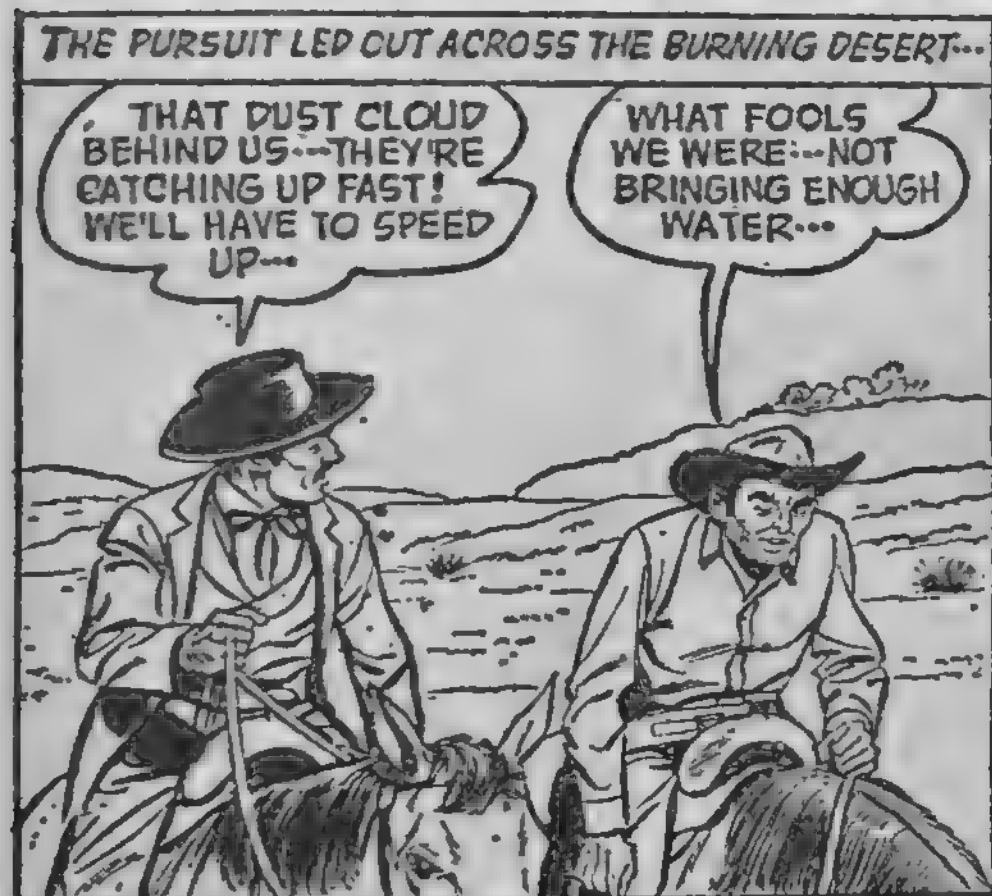
WHEN THEY FOUND DEATH VALLEY
SAM---

HE'S DEAD ALL
RIGHT, SHERIFF,
BUT I SAW WHO
IT WAS THAT
FOLLOWED HIM
INTO THE ALLEY.
IT WAS THE CACTUS
KID AND SLIP
GERDEN!

POOR OLD
SAM'S HEART
MUST HAVE
GIVEN OUT---
BUT THOSE
TWO ARE
RESPONSIBLE
FOR IT!

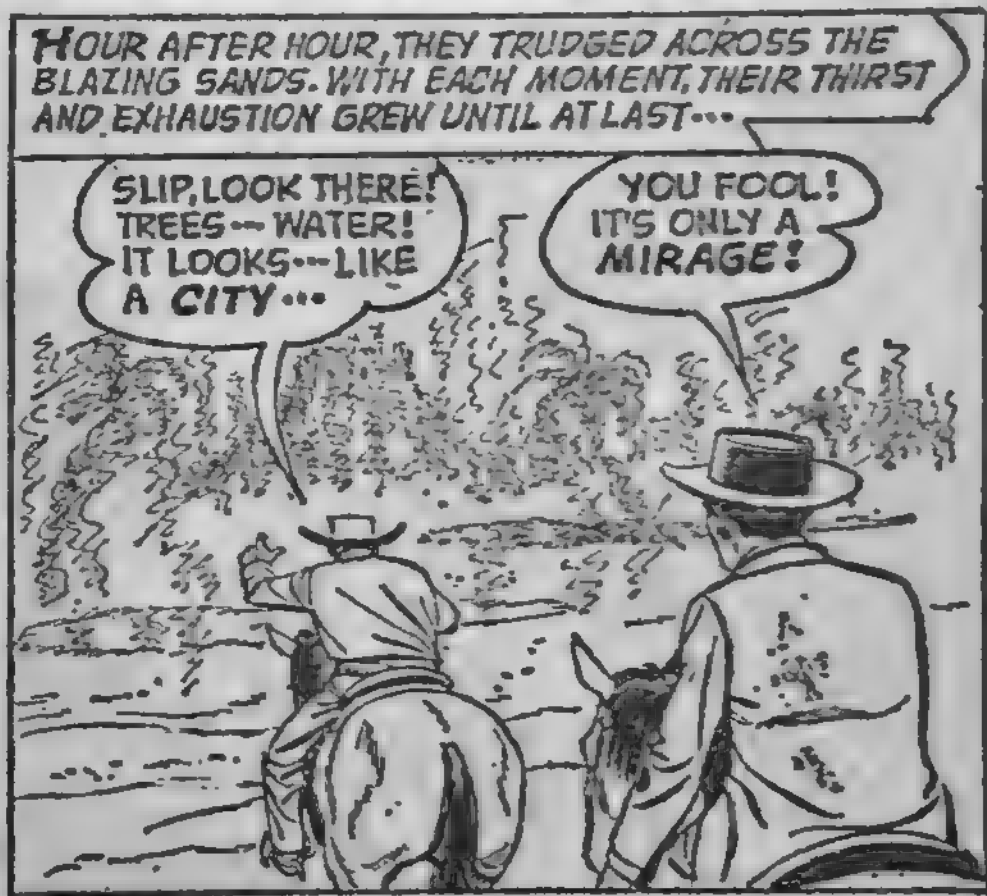


COME ON, MEN, WE'RE
HEADING AFTER THEM!
THEY HAVEN'T GOT MORE
THAN A COUPLE OF
MILES HEADSTART---



THAT DUST CLOUD
BEHIND US---THEY'RE
CATCHING UP FAST!
WE'LL HAVE TO SPEED
UP---

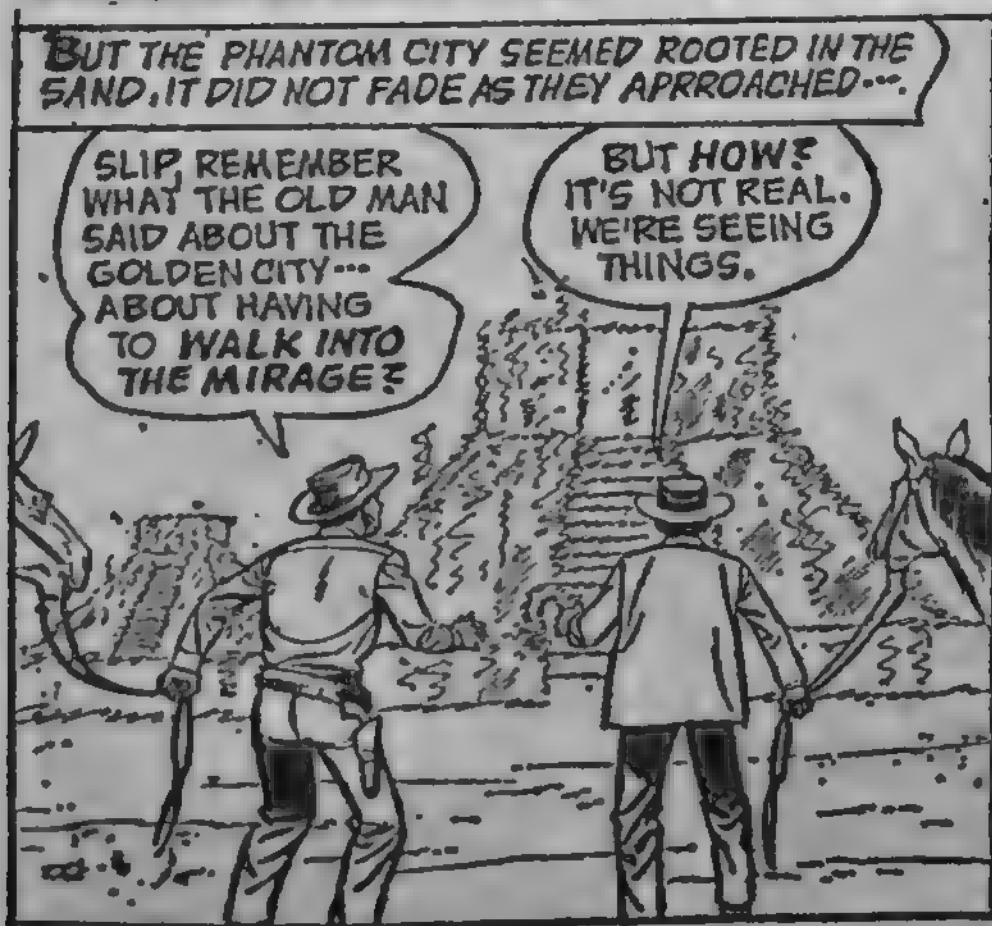
WHAT FOOLS
WE WERE---NOT
BRINGING ENOUGH
WATER---



HOUR AFTER HOUR, THEY TRUDGED ACROSS THE
BLAZING SANDS. WITH EACH MOMENT, THEIR THIRST
AND EXHAUSTION GREW UNTIL AT LAST---

SLIP, LOOK THERE!
TREES---WATER!
IT LOOKS---LIKE
A CITY---

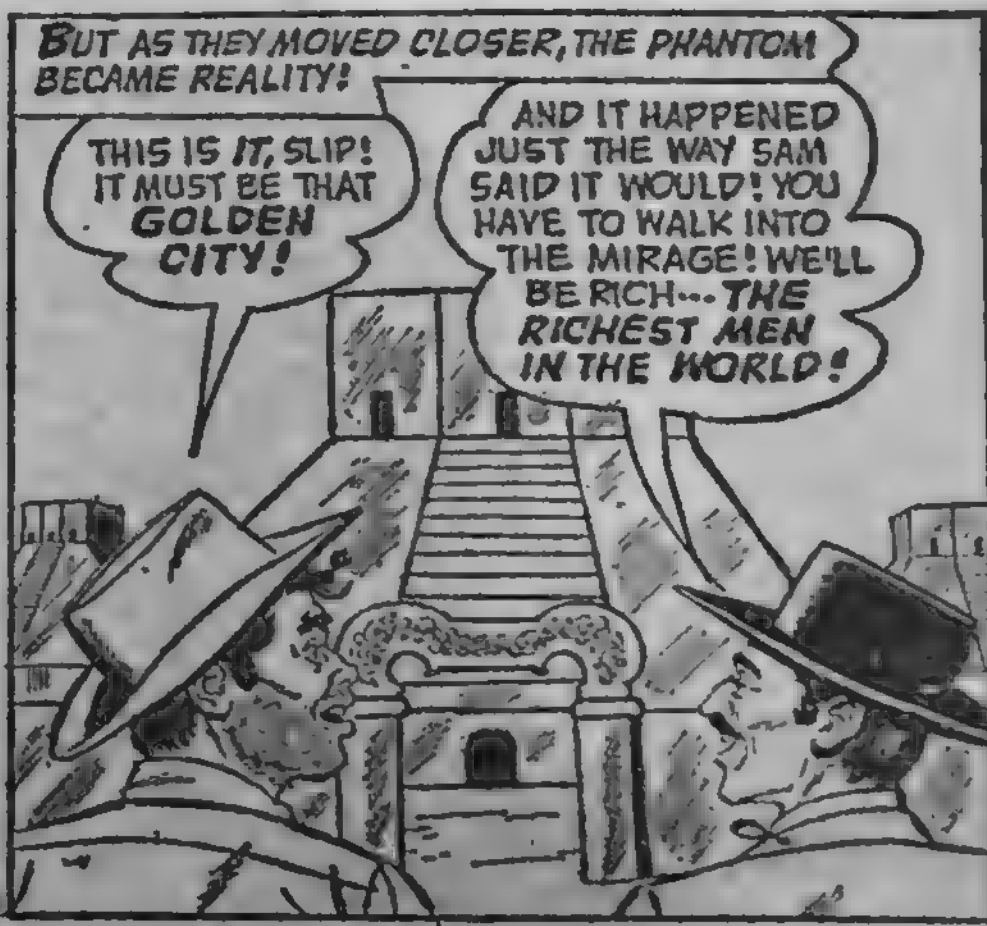
YOU FOOL!
IT'S ONLY A
MIRAGE!



BUT THE PHANTOM CITY SEEMED ROOTED IN THE
SAND. IT DID NOT FADE AS THEY APPROACHED---

SLIP, REMEMBER
WHAT THE OLD MAN
SAID ABOUT THE
GOLDEN CITY---
ABOUT HAVING
TO WALK INTO
THE MIRAGE?

BUT HOW?
IT'S NOT REAL.
WE'RE SEEING
THINGS.



BUT AS THEY MOVED CLOSER, THE PHANTOM
BECAME REALITY!

THIS IS IT, SLIP!
IT MUST BE THAT
GOLDEN
CITY!

AND IT HAPPENED
JUST THE WAY SAM
SAID IT WOULD! YOU
HAVE TO WALK INTO
THE MIRAGE! WE'LL
BE RICH---THE
RICHEST MEN
IN THE WORLD!

AS THEY ENTERED THE GOLDEN GATES...

WELCOME TO OUR CITY, OH STRANGERS. YOU ARE EXPECTED. I HAVE ORDERS TO ESCORT YOU BEFORE EL DORADO!

THAT'S THEIR KING! I GUESS WE MUST LOOK PRETTY IMPORTANT TO THESE SAVAGES.



GOLD! WALLS OF GOLD! HOUSES OF GOLD! GOLD EVERYWHERE WE LOOK!

AND IT'S OURS FOR THE ASKING. WE'LL LAY DOWN THE LAW TO THAT KING OF THEIRS.



THEN, IN THE ROYAL PALACE, THEY FACED THE GREAT EL DORADO HIMSELF...

HAVE YOU, TOO, COME HERE FOR THE YELLOW METAL YOUR PEOPLE PRIZE SO HIGHLY?

YEAH. WE'RE HERE TO GET GOLD...ALL THE GOLD WE CAN CARRY. GOLD LIKE THESE NUGGETS YOU GAVE DEATH VALLEY SAM!



YES, WE GAVE HIM THE GOLD THAT HE DREAMED OF FOR SO LONG...BECAUSE HE WAS A KINDLY MAN AND GOOD TO OUR PEOPLE! AND THEN YOU HUNTED HIM DOWN AND TOOK IT FROM HIM!

SO YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT, DO YOU?



IN THEIR GREED AND ARROGANCE, THEY MADE THEIR LAST DESPERATE PLAY...

ALL RIGHT, THEN...YOU KNOW WE'LL STOP AT NOTHING UNLESS YOU GIVE US THE GOLD WE CAME FOR!

THERE IS NO NEED TO USE WEAPONS! REMEMBER, GOLD IS ALMOST WORTHLESS IN MY KINGDOM.



GO WITH MY GUARDS. THEY WILL TAKE YOU TO A ROOM OF GOLD, WHERE YOU WILL BE SURROUNDED ON ALL SIDES BY THE YELLOW METAL...ENOUGH TO SATISFY A LIFETIME OF GREED!

NOW YOU'RE TALKING. LET'S GO, SLIP!

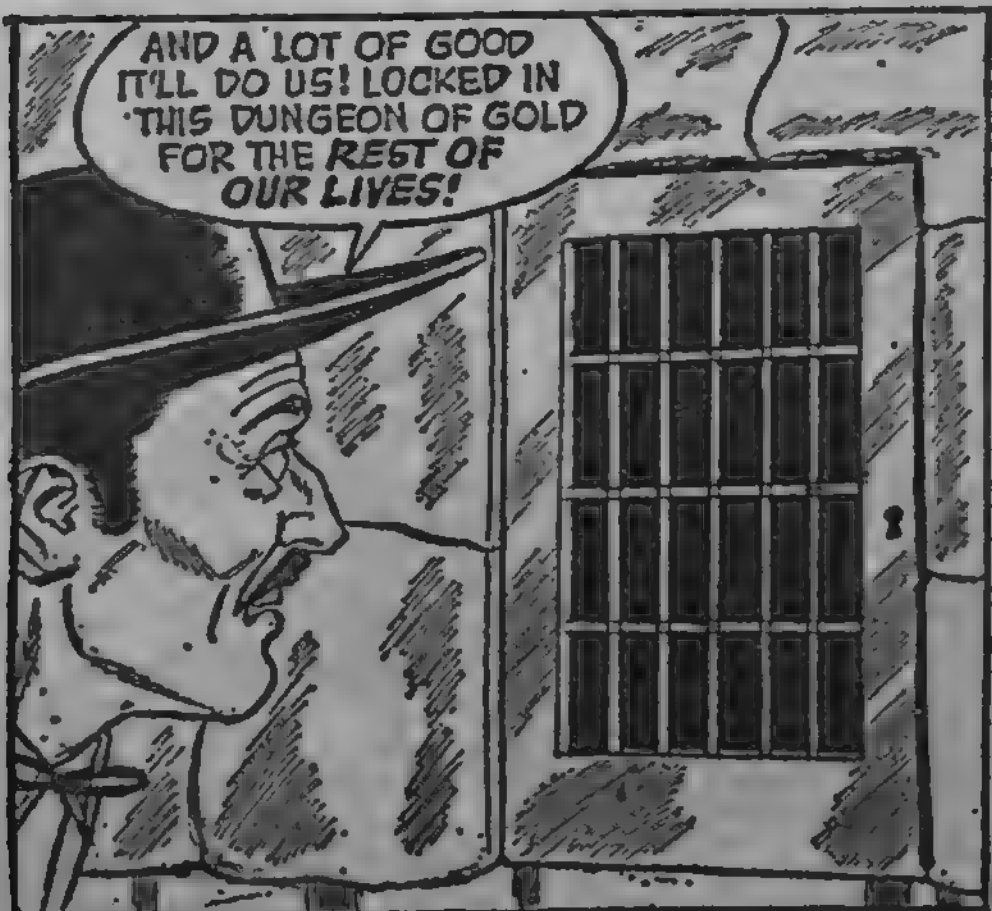
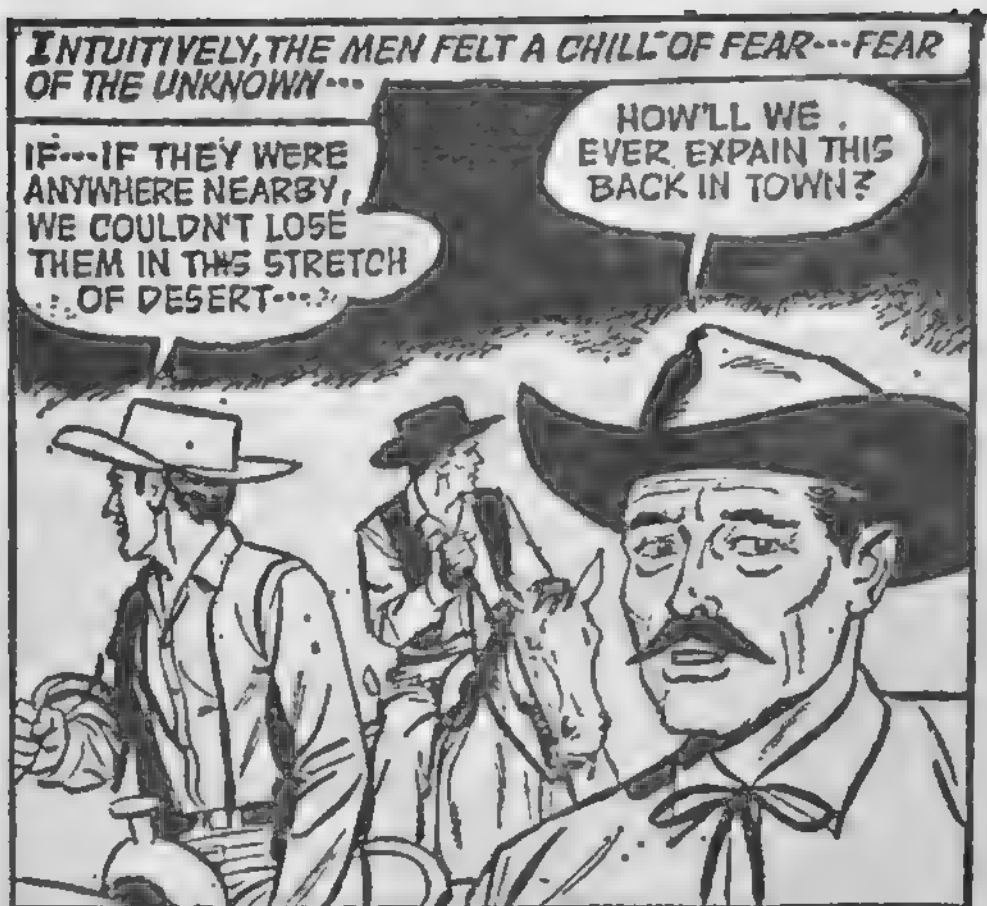


MEANWHILE, OUT IN THE DESERT WASTELAND...

BUT SHERIFF, YOU SAW IT YOURSELF...THOSE TWO BUZZARDS DISAPPEARED RIGHT INTO THE HEART OF THAT MIRAGE!

BUT EVERYONE KNOWS THAT A MIRAGE IS JUST A TRICK OF THE DESERT HEAT WAVES. ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS FOLLOW THEIR TRAIL.





UNKNOWN BEAST

SEVERAL YEARS AGO A BRITISH NEWSPAPER FINANCED AN EXPEDITION TO MOUNT EVEREST! ITS PURPOSE--TO INVESTIGATE A STRANGE AND CONSTANTLY-REPEATED RUMOR--



STRANGE SNOWMAN! EVERY EVEREST EXPEDITION HAD HEARD OF THIS CREATURE--ONLY PART HUMAN--AN INHABITANT OF THE IGY UPPER SLOPES--

IT'S A WILD GOOSE CHASE, I TELL YOU!

MAYBE NOT! AFTER ALL MANY OF THE NEPAL NATIVES SWEAR THEY'VE SEEN THEM!



BEFORE BRAVING THE MOUNTAIN THE ELDERS OF THE NEARBY VILLAGES HAD BEEN CLOSELY QUESTIONED--

YES, I SAW SNOWMAN--LONG AGO! IT WALKS ON TWO LEGS, LIKE A MAN--BUT IT HAS THE SHAGGINESS OF A BEAST! IT CAN SPEAK, AND THINK--BUT IT RUNS AT THE FIRST SIGHT OF MAN!



EVERY CONCEIVABLE TRAP WAS SET TO PHOTOGRAPH OR CAPTURE A SPECIMEN--WITHOUT SUCCESS! BUT AS THE CLIMBERS VENTURED EVER HIGHER--



THE EXPEDITION SPENT MONTHS ON EVEREST--BUT DISCOVERED NOTHING MORE! SO ENTISTS COULD MAKE NOTHING OF THE FOOTPRINTS--EXCEPT TO DECLARE THAT THEY BELONGED TO AN UNKNOWN CREATURE! AND SO THE MOUNTAIN STILL KEEPS ITS SECRET--BUT FOR NOW, LADY!



END!

"THE EMPTY SEAT"

In the lives of each of us I am certain there are certain experiences which we feel it would almost be useless to discuss with most people. These experiences are those usually connected with the supernatural and reach out into what some called, "The Realm Beyond." However with the remarkably rapid growth of the Science of Parapsychology there has been a different attitude in the ranks of the specialists as well as with the ordinary people. We are on the threshold of trying to devise tests to see if we can verify E.S.P. and Levitation. Since the experience I had is part of the past there is no way to scientifically test whether it happened or not. All I can do is to relate the incidents and let you be the judge.

In the early spring of 1927 I moved with my widowed mother to a small apartment in a very new large house on Riverside Drive. This was at that time considered an exclusive section of the city. From the Drive I walked one block east to the subway or the bus. Within ten minutes we were in the heart of the city. The apartment house had three elevators. In those days they hadn't worked out the self-service elevator. So you had an elevator operator who opened and closed the door.

About ten in the morning I came back home after a long walk on the Drive. I headed for the nearest elevator and there was a young lady in front of me. Apparently the operator didn't see her as she was about to enter a rather crowded elevator. He started to shut the door and I

pulled her back just in time to avoid an accident. She was a bit pale and managed to stutter out something that sounded like "Thank You." I suggested she sit down for a few minutes on one of the overstuffed chairs in the lobby. So that was how I met Elaine Berley. We lived on the fourth floor and she lived on the eighth floor. She was pretty and I only had one thought in mind: To see her again.

The next morning I sort of waited outside for half an hour until she appeared and we both started speaking about various things and eventually about the latest Charlie Chaplin film being shown in a neighborhood theatre. That gave me my chance and I asked her to go out with me that evening. To my pleasant surprise she agreed. The accepted procedure in those days was to take a girl to the movies and then to the ice cream parlor for an ice cream soda or sundae in the summer, for hot chocolate in the winter.

I started taking her out two and three times a week and knew that she wasn't unfavorable towards continuing this. At the end of two months I told her I would like to meet her mother. She had already met mine. She suggested we take a walk along the Drive and sit on a bench. She had something important to tell me. I hadn't any idea what it might be and ten minutes later seated next to me she began her tale.

"I had the most wonderful father in the world. He died in an accident ten years ago. But before he died he told my mother he would remain

around just to keep an eye on the two of us until I had met the man who would be suitable for me. I believe the dead are dead. That they neither remain around us in a spirit form nor that they can return. But my mother believes exactly the opposite. She feels that my father is still a member of the household. At the table there is a seating for him and she talks to him.

"My mother is a very successful business woman and in all of her dealings very intelligent. Only in this one way is she different from other people. But she is my mother and that is what counts. I certainly would like you to meet my mother. But you must be prepared for all of this. For she will ask you to stay for supper and that might be an ordeal."

For a few minutes I had to do some tough and hard realistic thinking. Actually I felt a sort of a shudder going down my spine. A household with a ghost in it! Then I took another look at Elaine and my actions were an answer. I took her in my arms — right there in broad daylight — and kissed her. I remember two things. She kissed me in return. And a very well dressed matronly woman passed us and made a remark.

"What is the world coming to in these days?"

At four thirty that afternoon, Elaine's mother came home from work and I met her.

"You will stay for supper, of course," she smiled.

In those days a maid didn't cost a fortune. The table was set by their maid, Dinah, for four places. I sat between Elaine and her mother and her mother faced the empty chair. Then she started speaking to that empty chair.

"John I want you to meet Harold Ferguson, a very nice young man. Do you agree with me? You do. And I should tell Elaine she is lucky to have such a nice man."

That conversation went on during the entire meal. Then since it was a warm evening we went down again for a walk. Elaine was very quiet. Finally she spoke her thoughts.

"I love my mother very much. I don't think in all fairness I can ask you to accept me and that part of her life which I think enables her to live. You were wonderful at the table. A girl couldn't ask for anything more from a fellow. But it is not fair to you."

"I haven't protested nor objected," I reminded her. "If this is the price I have to pay so that I can ask you to marry me then I will do so."

This time she kissed me first and I was glad that the lady who had passed on in the afternoon wasn't around to make another remark. My mother had gone out to the coast to visit my older brother who was teaching at a University there. So for the time being I was alone in the apartment. Elaine suggested I have sup-

per there every evening until my mother returned. And we would tell her mother the good news.

The next evening the table was set in a real fancy manner. And Mrs. Berley kissed her future-son-in-law.

"I know that this will make John so happy," she told me.

We sat down at the table and she began a conversation with the empty seat.

"What did you say, John? Now that Elaine has the right man your work is over. This will be the last time you are with us? And that I shouldn't worry but just be happy? If those are your wishes then I will abide by them."

The doorbell rang and two masked men entered. One was holding a gun in his hand.

"All we want are the diamonds you got on you, lady," said one of the men.

I started to get up from my chair and the one with the gun gave me a warning.

"Don't try to be a dead hero, buster. Stay put and live. We won't hurt anybody."

He bent over to get the big diamond that Mrs. Berley had on her finger. There was a chandelier in the room. I saw it move and crash down on the head of that man. The other hold-up man moved in to help his friend. Suddenly the plate of soup in front of the empty seat went up into the air and the contents splattered all over the face of that man. He yelled in pain and agony. Next thing I knew I picked up the gun. The other man was still out.

"Call the police," I told Elaine.

When the police arrived they were more than overjoyed at being able to tell us that those two men were wanted for a long list of similar crimes. They didn't ask too many questions about what had happened. They figured out there must have been a quick struggle. They wanted to make a sort of hero out of me but I refused them on that one.

When they left I got up on a ladder and checked that chandelier. Definitely it hadn't fallen by accident. I could see it had been ripped out of the base in the ceiling. And furthermore I saw that plate of soup go into action. Somebody had lifted it up from the table. Now what conclusions to make? Let me add that never again was an empty seat put at the table in that house. I married Elaine four months later.

There have been times when I have meditated much over it and tried to work out some rational explanation. But any such natural theory was up against the facts. A theory can not destroy facts. It must be the other way round. So any theory to be used as an explanation must have its basis in the Supernatural. You can take it from there.

ANT-MAN and THE WASP "MUSIC TO SCREAM BY"

FEATURING:
TRAGO!
"THE MAN WITH THE
MAGIC TRUMPET!"

THAT MACABRE
MUSIC IT-- IT'S
PIERCING MY BRAIN,
STEALING MY SENSES
AWAY! TRAGO... HE'LL
ENSLAVE THE WORLD
WITH HIS TRUMPET...
AND THERE'S NO WAY
TO STOP HIM!

IT'S CREATING
HORRIBLE
IMAGES INSIDE
MY BRAIN!
I-- I CAN'T
STAND IT!
ANT-MAN...
HELP! HELP!
ME BEFORE I
GO SCREAMING
MAD!

IT IS SAID THAT "MUSIC HATH
CHARMS TO SOOTHE THE SAVAGE
BEAST!" BUT THE MUSICIAN
KNOWN TO THE JAZZ WORLD
AS TRAGO, FOUND A NEW
KIND OF MUSIC, AND TURNED
HIS TRUMPET INTO THE PIPES
OF PAN! NOTES ISSUED FROM
HIS BRASS INSTRUMENT THAT
CAME FROM THE ZONE OF MAD-
NESS... SOUND THAT ENSLAVED
THE BRAIN AND BROUGHT A
WHOLE CITY UNDER HIS CONTROL
...THE BEGINNING OF A COM-
POSITION TO LOOT THE WORLD
...THE START OF A SERENADE
OF PILLAGE, A SYMPHONY OF
CRIME! HOW COULD ANT-MAN
AND THE WASP FIGHT WAVES
OF SOUND THAT STOLE AWAY
THEIR SENSES AND HURLED
THEM INTO A BOTTOMLESS
PIT OF MUSICAL NIGHTMARE?



STORY PLOT..... STAN LEE
SCRIPT..... H.E. HUNTLEY
ART..... DON HECK









THERE HE IS! STING HIS ANKLE! HURRY, WASP! YOU CAN STOP HIM!

SASH! A WOMAN'S WORK IS NEVER DONE!



OWWW!



LISTEN! THE MANAGER IS BREAKING DOWN THE DOOR!

NO NEED TO FLY! TRAP! I WON'T BE GOING ANYWHERE NOW!



AH, THERE YOU ARE! DIDN'T GET AWAY WITH IT, DID YOU, TRAGO? WHY, TRAGO? WHY WOULD YOU DO THIS TO ME?

I-I DON'T KNOW, M. IFF CO. I CAN'T I CAN THE SAFE OPEN-- AND THE MONEY-- AND I (LY), I EARN MUCH WITH MY TRUMPET-- SO, IT SEEMED LIKE EAT DOUGH!



YOU MUSICIANS! YOU'RE ALL LUNKHEADS! WELL, THERE IS NO REAL HARM DONE NOW THAT I'VE GOT MY MONEY BACK! COME INTO MY OFFICE...



TRAGO, I'M NOT GOING TO PRESS CHARGES! I'M GOING TO GET YOU A TICKET ON THE FIRST PLANE OUT OF THE COUNTRY... BECAUSE OF OUR FRIENDSHIP! JUST DON'T COME BACK, YOU HEAR? I'LL TAKE THE COST OF THE TICKET OUT OF THE WAGES I OWE YOU!

OKAY BY ME!



HELLO! YOU SAY YOUR NEXT PLANE LEAVES FOR NEW DEHLI, INDIA? THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH! RESERVE ONE SEAT IN THE NAME OF TRAGO! HE'LL BE RIGHT THERE!

WELL, I GUESS THAT'S THE LAST WE'LL HEAR OF THE MAN WITH THE MAGIC TRUMPET! LET'S GO!

AWW... AND HE PLAYED SUCH A MELLOW HORN!

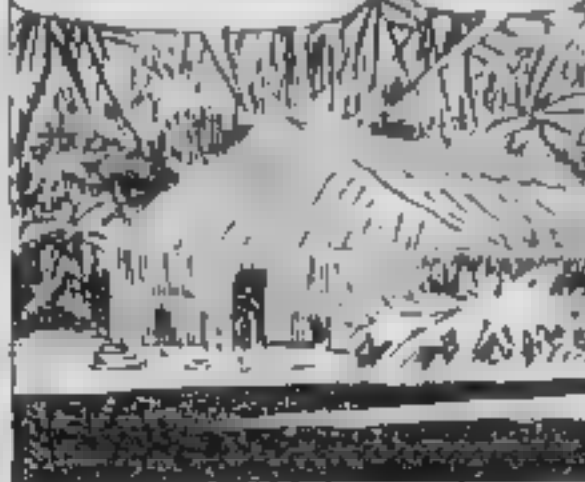
NO, ANT-MAN, YOU ARE VERY WRONG! THIS IS NOT THE BEGINNING! A DIALOGUE TO THE STARS OF TRAGO THE MAN WITH THE MAGIC KNOT! YOUR LIFE IS INEXTRICABLY BOUND TOGETHER IN THE WEB OF FATE, AND THE FUTURE WILL BE NO ACT IN A DANCE OF DEATH AS YOU HAVE MISUNDERSTOOD!



WE PICKED UP THE TRAIL OF MAGAGANAH AND THE OF NEW DELHI, TWO MONTHS LATER.

I HAD BEEN VERY ILL... FEVER, STARVATION! I FOUND YOU ALMOST DEAD! MY NAME IS GHAZANDI, A MAGE, AND A MAN OF ANCIENT ETHIOPIA!

THANKS FOR THE INFO! I WAS STARVING!



IS IT TRUE THAT, WITH MUSIC?

GHAZANDI!

THAT YOU HAVE NEVER EVEN IMAGINED!



IF THAT'S TRUE, THEN TEACH ME! MAN, I WANNA SWING! I WANNA BE THE TOP HORN MAN! YOU'RE NOT KIDDIN' ABOUT PLAYIN' NOTES NO ONE ELSE CAN, ARE YOU?

I KNOW MANY THINGS! I KNOW FROM YOUR MIND THAT YOU STOLE! AND THOUGHT YOU SAW TINY HUMAN FIGURES NO BIGGER THAN AN ANT AND A WASP!



YOU DID SEE THEM! THERE ARE MANY STRANGE THINGS THAT ARE POSSIBLE! I HAVE NEVER BEFORE HAD A STUDENT, BUT IF IT IS WRITTEN IN THE STARS THAT I SHOULD BE YOUR TEACHER, WE WILL BEGIN!



TIME PASSES, AND TRAGO LEARNS MANY THINGS...

GOOD! YOU HAVE MASTERED THE NOTES THAT HYPNOTIZE THE KING COBRA! I HAVE TAUGHT YOU ALSO THE ART OF HYPNOTISM, USING YOUR EYES AS THE POWER MEDIUM!



IF MUSIC CAN HYPNOTIZE A REPTILE, WHY CAN'T IT HYPNOTIZE HUMANS? GHAZANDI, TELL ME! I WANT TO KNOW!

THERE IS GREAT DANGER INVOLVED! BUT, YOU ARE MY DISCIPLE! I WILL TEACH YOU!



THE MONTHS FLY BY AND THEN, RETURNING FROM HELPING THE POLICE, ANJAMAN AND TIE WAT PARR REMINDED OF...

REMEMBER TRAGO, THE MAN WITH THE MAGN TRUMPET? WONDER IF HE'S STILL IN INDIA?

CERTAINLY I REMEMBER! IT WAS ONE OF THE FEW TIMES I GOT YOU INTO A NIGHT CLUB! HE WAS A COOL BRASS MAN! BUT YOU JUST DIDN'T DO IT!

JAZZ
NITE
starring
The ALL STARS!

NO, TRAGO IS NOT STILL IN INDIA! FOR, AT THAT MOMENT, IN A SMALL NIGHT CLUB IN CONNECTICUT, OFF THE MERRITT PARKWAY, TRAGO, HIS APPEARANCE ALTERED, IS PLAYING WITH A SMALL COMBO!

GO, MAN, GO!!

THE MUSIC WAIRS, SLURRING, JUMPING SLEAZY SOUTHERN JAZZ! THEN FROM TRAGO'S BLARING TRUMPET NEW NOTES FORM, NOTES NO HUMAN HAS EVER HEARD BEFORE...

HARRY...I...I FEEL STRANGE! I THINK I'M GOING TO FAINT!

MY HEAD! MY BRAIN'S WHIRLING!

NOW IS THE TIME TO TEST MY POWERS! FIRST, I MUST REINFORCE THE HYPNOTIC BONDS WITH WHICH I HOLD MY MUSICIANS ENSLAVED, SO THEY WILL NOT BE AFFECTED!!

LOOK DEEP...DEEP! YOU WILL DO ONLY AS MY WILL COMMANDS...YOU WILL HEAR NOTHING BUT THE SOUNDS OF YOUR OWN INSTRUMENTS! NOW...WE WILL PLAY!!

THE MUSIC GOES ON AND ON, SOME NOTES UNHEARD BY THE EAR BUT HEARD BY THE SUB-CONSCIOUS! THEN, FANTASY COMES...MUSICAL IMAGES IN THE MIND, FORMED BY THE MUSICAL HYPNOSIS...AS THE STARTLING STRAINS FILL THE ROOM...



TRAGO RAISES HIS HAND! THE MUSIC STOPS! THE AUDIENCE IS MOTIONLESS...HELPLESS! COMPLETELY UNDER TRAGO'S SPELL!

NOW! PASS AMONG THE AUDIENCE AND TAKE THEIR VALUABLES! I COMMAND YOU!



MOMENTS LATER ...

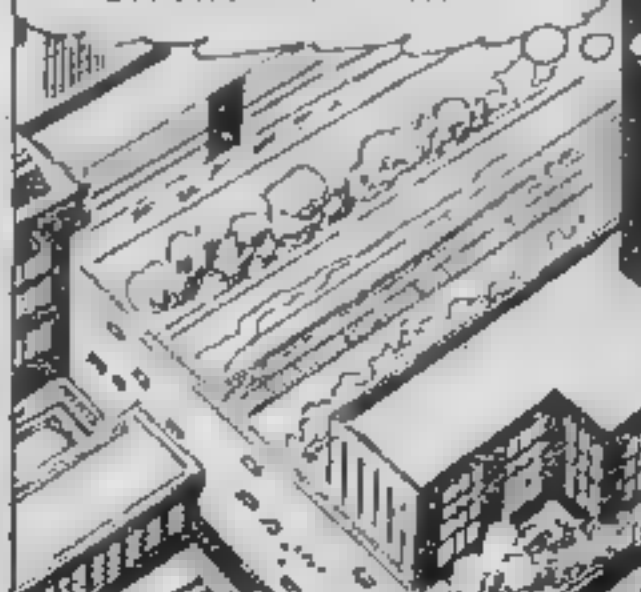
HA, IT WORKED ... THE TEST HAS BEEN A COMPLETE SUCCESS! BUT, **THIS** IS NOT WORTH BOTHERING ABOUT... A HANDFUL OF JEWELS AND BILLS / RETURN THOSE BAUBLES, EACH PIECE TO ITS RIGHTFUL OWNER!



NOW, I'LL BREAK THE HYPNOSIS... AND THEY WON'T EVEN KNOW THAT TIME HAS ELAPSED AND ANYTHING HAS HAPPENED! THEN, ON TO NEW YORK, AND THE **BIG PRIZE!**

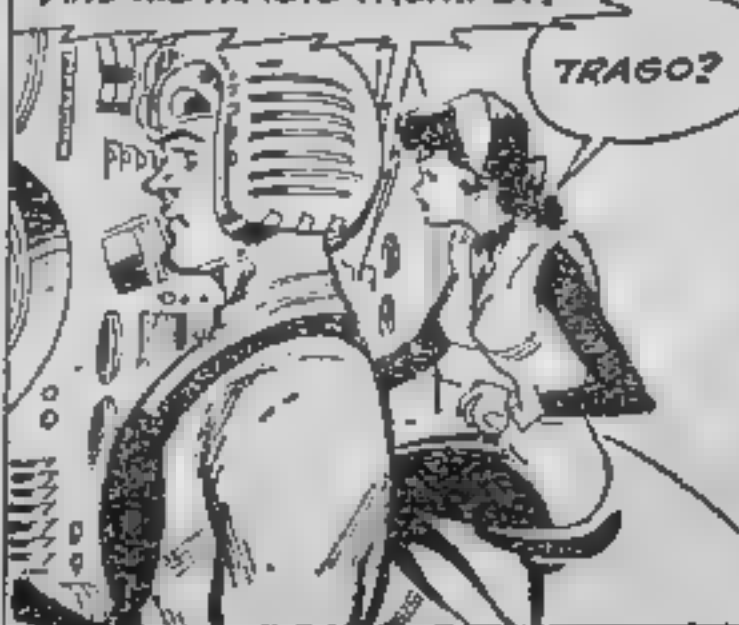


I'LL CONTACT A TV. STATION DIRECTOR, USE MY HYPNOTIC POWERS TO GET MY LITTLE COMBO A BROADCASTING SPOT! THEN, ONCE MY MUSIC IS BEAMED OUT OVER THE AIRWAYS, **EVERYONE** HEARING IT WILL BE HYPNOTIZED! I'LL HYPNOTIZE AN **ENTIRE CITY...** AND LOOT IT AT WILL!



A FEW DAYS LATER, IN THE LAB OF HENRY PYM, AS THE SCIENTIST USES HIS FANTASTIC CYBERNETIC MACHINE TO RECEIVE ELECTRONIC IMPULSE MESSAGES FROM THE VAST ARMY OF ANTS WHILE **THE WASP** LISTENS TO A LOCAL RADIO STATION...

...AND NOW, FRIENDS, WE PRESENT THE MAHARAJAH OF JAZZ... **TRAGO,** AND HIS MAGIC TRUMPET!



TRAGO?

THE ANTS REPORT THAT ALL IS QUIET IN THE CITY...

HENRY, COME HERE! LISTEN TO THIS! IT'S **TRAGO.** REMEMBER HIM?



THEN, SUDDENLY, AS THE MUSIC STARTS...

HENRY!! WHA... WHAT'S HAPPENING?

MY EARS! MY BRAIN! JAN, IT'S THE MUSIC! QUICK! WE MUST REDUCE OUR SIZE... YOU'VE GOT TO TURN OFF THE RADIO... GOT TO!



THE REDUCING GAS SWIRLS AROUND THEM AS THEY SHRINK WITH INCREDIBLE RAPIDITY!

CAN'T DO IT! THAT MUSIC! IT'S TOO POWERFUL! CAN'T RESIST IT!!

NEED HELP... FAST! I'LL CONTACT MY FAITHFUL KORR! KORR... TO ME, KORR!



THE DISCORDANT MUSIC WAILS ON, BRINGING HYPNOSIS, BRINGING NIGHTMARE TO THE MINDS OF THE TWO TINY UNCONSCIOUS FIGURES!



THEN A TINY FORM APPEARS AT THE WINDOW! IT IS KORR! KORR, THE FATHER HAS HEARD THE CALL AND ANSWERED! HE SEES WITH MANY-FACETED EYES...AND HE UNDERSTANDS! HIS ANTENNAE QUIVER AS HE SENDS A CALL, FOR HELP!



AND SO THEY COME.. THE ANTS, SWARMING TO KORR'S SIGNAL...



AND THEY CARRY THE HELPLESS ANT-SIZE HUMANS AWAY!



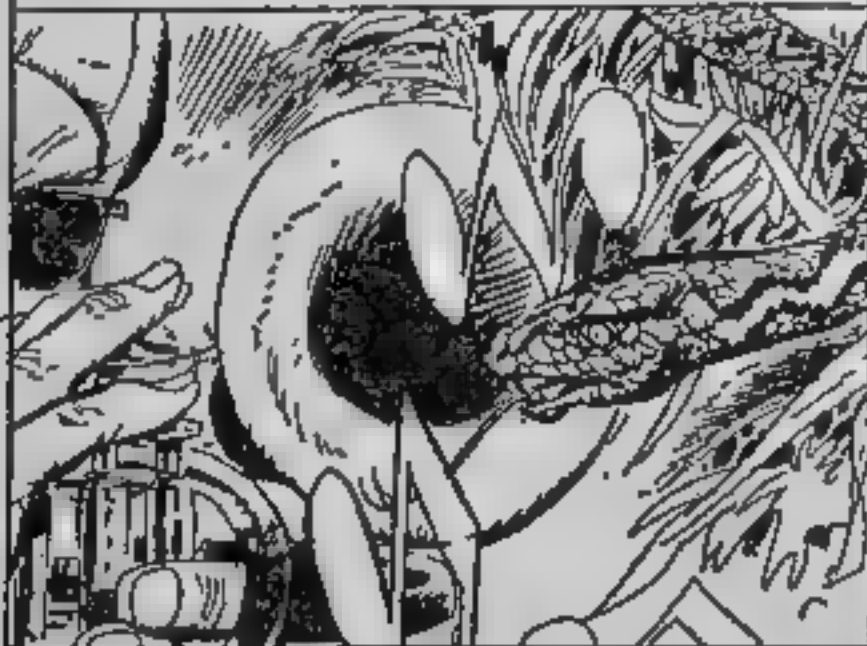
WHILE TRAGO PLAYS...



AND, THROUGHOUT THE CITY, PEOPLE ARE FROZEN IN A HYPNOTIC TRANCE!



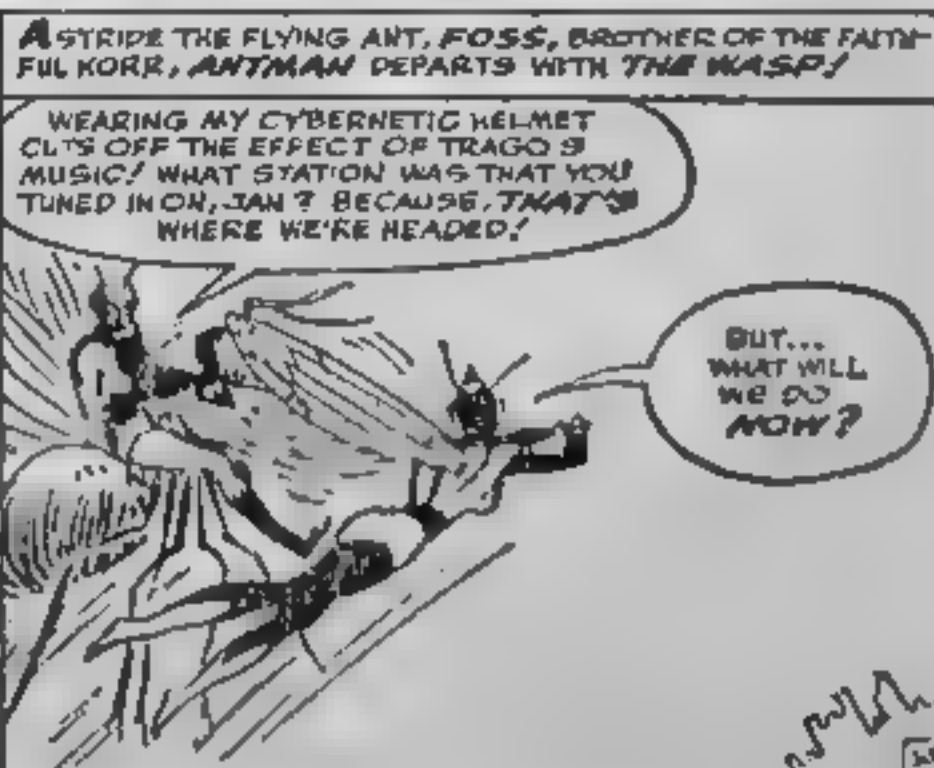
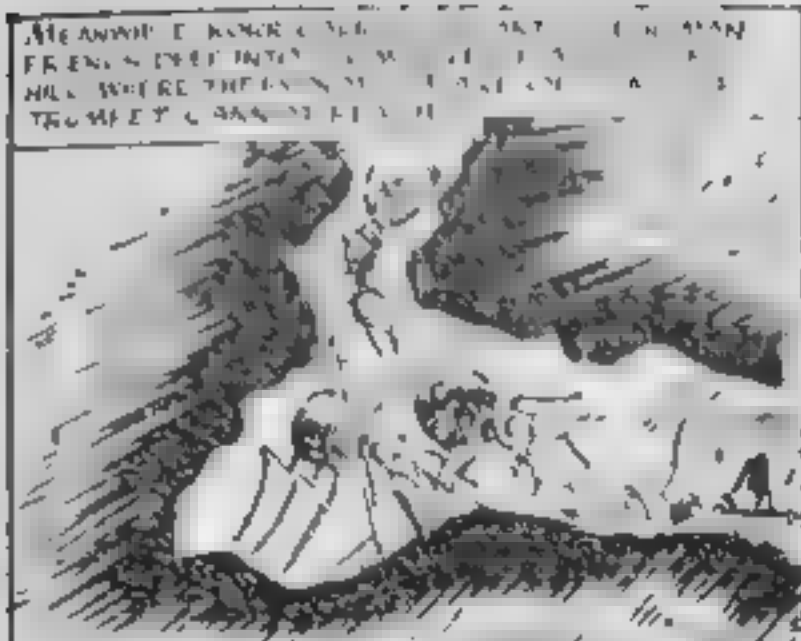
BUT TRAGO HAS NOT FORGOTTEN THE TWO TINY HUMANS HE ONCE SAW, WHO FOILED HIS EARLIER ATTEMPT AT ROBBERY...AND HIS HORN SENDS A MESSAGE TO THE REPTILES IN THE GARDENS AND FIELDS..."**FIND ANTMAN, CAPTURE HIM!**"



THEN TRAGO'S EYES SEND THEIR MESSAGE TO HIS HYPNOTIZED MUSICIANS!



HEAR ME! HEAR MY MENTAL COMMANDS! FIND THOSE BANKS IN THE CITY WHERE MY MUSIC HAS REACHED...AND LOOT THEM!! NOW GO!

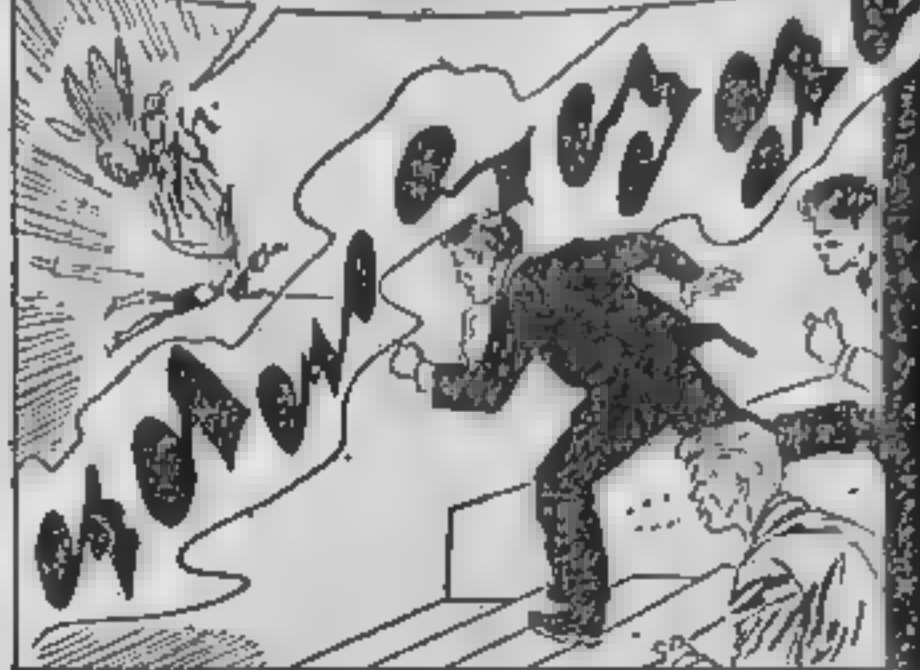


REMEMBER, TRAGO WENT TO INDIA?! AND NEHRADU TOLD US ABOUT AN INDIAN MYSTIC WHO COULD HYPNOTIZE MEN, AS WELL AS SNAKES WITH HIS MUSIC! TRAGO MUST HAVE LEARNED THE ART FROM HIM!



LOOK AT THE PEOPLE... FROZEN, HYPNOTIZED, AND THEIR FACES MIRRORING THEIR SHOCK!

HERE'S THE BROADCASTING STATION! THOSE THREE MEN EMERGING AREN'T HYPNOTIZED! THAT MEANS... WAIT!! I'M GETTING A MESSAGE FROM THE ANTS IN THE STUDIO... ABOUT TRAGO...



THOSE THREE ARE TRAGO'S MUSICIANS! HE HAS THEM UNDER HIS SPELL, AND HAS SENT THEM OUT TO ROB AND LOOT! WASP, STOP THEM! DRIVE THEM BACK INTO THE STUDIO!



THE WASP BUZZES RAPIDLY FROM ONE OF THE HYPNOTIZED MUSICIANS TO THE OTHER, STINGING THEM AND, WITH HER STING, HERDING THEM LIKE SHEEP!



AS ANTMAN ENTERS THE STUDIO...

NOW I'LL USE MY ENLARGING GAS AGAIN! ONCE I GET MY HANDS ON TRAGO, HE'LL NEVER PLAY ANOTHER HYPNOTIC NOTE!



I-I FORGOT! I DON'T HAVE MY GAS TUBES! I'LL HAVE TO BATTLE TRAGO WHILE I'M ANT-SIZED SOMEHOW!



AND, AT THAT INSTANT, TRAGO SEES ANT-MAN!

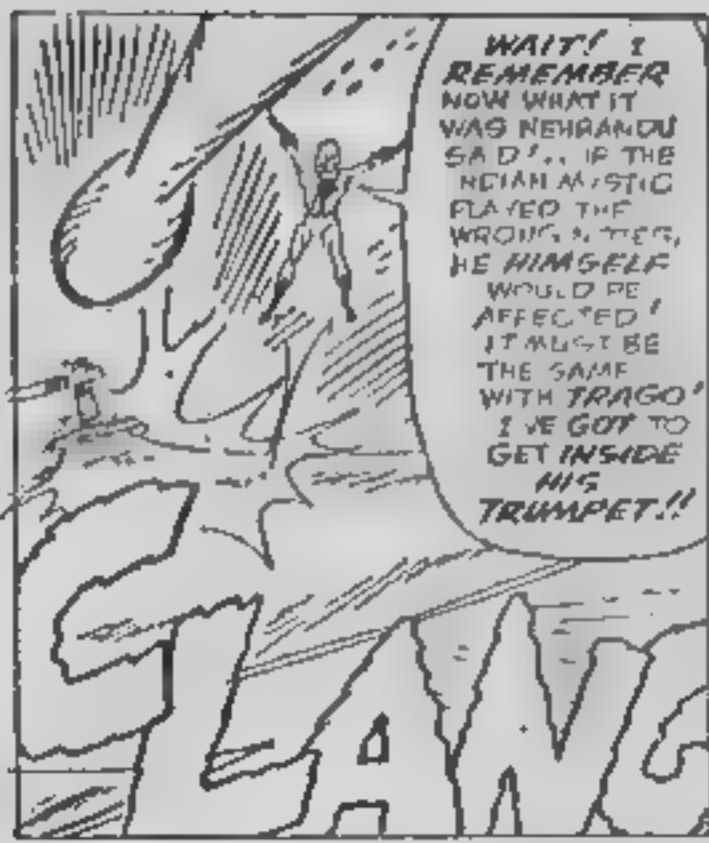




HE SAW ME! HE'S TRYING TO GET ME! HAVE TO MOVE FAST!!



I'VE BEEN LUCKY SO FAR... BUT I CAN'T EVADE HIM MUCH LONGER!



WAIT! I REMEMBER NOW WHAT IT WAS NEHRANDU SAID... IF THE NEIAN MISTIC PLAYED THE WRONG NOTES, HE HIMSELF WOULD BE AFFECTED! IT MUST BE THE SAME WITH TRAGO! I'VE GOT TO GET INSIDE HIS TRUMPET!!



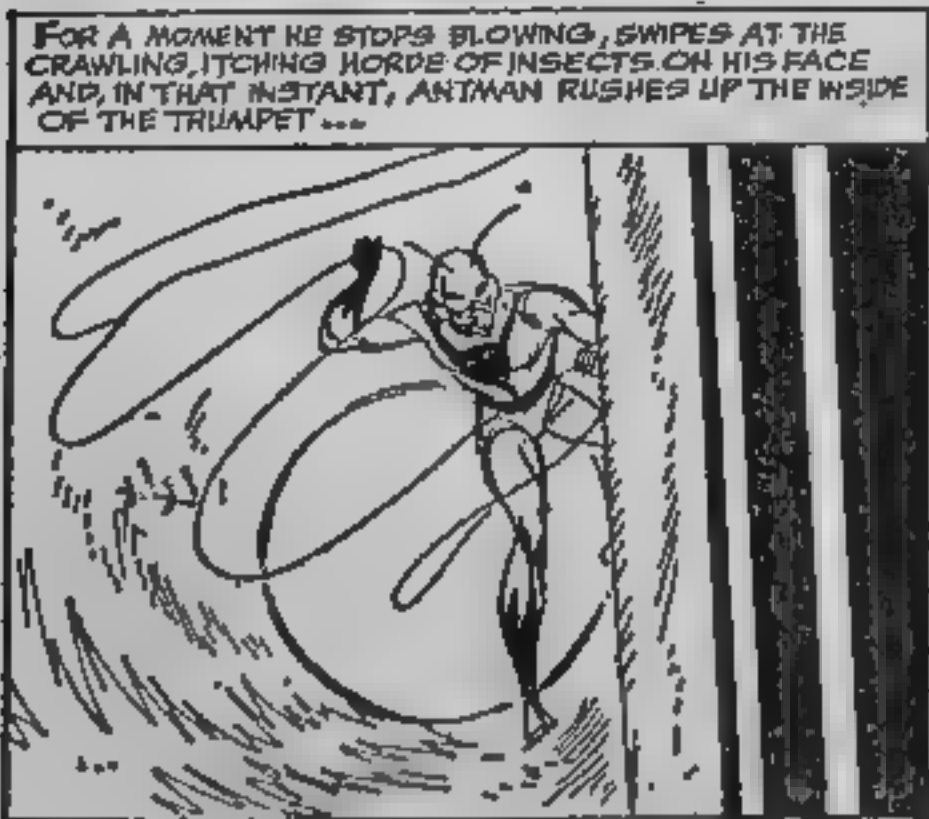
TRAGO MUST HAVE CHANGED OR ALTERED THE PLAYING MECHANISM OF THE TRUMPET TO PRODUCE HIS HYPNOTIC MUSIC! IF I CAN SOMEHOW ALTER THE TONE...



INSIDE THE TRUMPET, WIND AND MUSIC BEAT AT ANTMAN LIKE A TORNADO AS HE STRUGGLES TO HOLD HIS BALANCE ON THE SHINY, SLIPPERY BRASS!



THEN, HENRY PYM'S ARMY OF ANTS ATTACK! CRAWLING UP THE LEGS OF THE MAD TRUMPETER, ADVANCING UNTIL THEY REACH HIS FACE!



FOR A MOMENT HE STOPS BLOWING, SWIPES AT THE CRAWLING, ITCHING HORDE OF INSECTS ON HIS FACE AND, IN THAT INSTANT, ANTMAN RUSHES UP THE INSIDE OF THE TRUMPET...



LASSOING THE PLUNGER, AND PULLING BACK WITH ALL HIS MIGHT...

LUCKILY, MY REDUCING GAS DOESN'T REDUCE MY FULL-GROWN STRENGTH AS WELL AS MY SIZE! AH, IT'S BENDING!

SUPPENLY, TRAGO CAN NO LONGER PLAY THE HYPNOTIC NOTES! DISCORD BLARES FROM THE HORN AS TRAGO, IN PANIC, PLAYS A SERIES OF NOTES HE HAS NEVER PLAYED BEFORE...



THOSE NOTES HE HIT BY CHANCE WERE THE ONES GHAZANDI HAD WARNED HIM ABOUT... NOTES THAT AFFECTED THE PLAYER, CHANGING HIS CHARACTER, HIS MENTALITY, STEALING AWAY HIS POWER...



THROUGHOUT THE CITY PEOPLE STIR, MOVE, CONTINUE ON THEIR VARIOUS WAYS, NOT REMEMBERING THE HYPNOSIS, THE NIGHTMARE THAT HAD DESCENDED ON NEW YORK!



SEVERAL WEEKS LATER, AT A LOCAL BISTRO...

TRAGO'S HAPPY NOW! HE DOESN'T REMEMBER THE PAST, BUT HE'S DOING WHAT HE LOVES BEST... PLAYING THE TRUMPET!



LEAVING SO SOON? BUT I THOUGHT YOU WERE GETTING TO LIKE JAZZ!



I AM, JAN, BUT I'D LIKE TO GO SOMEPLACE WHERE IT'S QUIET...



I SUPPOSE YOU'LL THINK I'M CORNY... JUST A SENTIMENTAL FOOL, BUT... I'M THINKING OF KORR! HE WAS ONLY AN ANT, BUT...



"GREATER LOVE HATH NO ONE THAN THIS, THAT HE LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS!"



CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT

"FLYING SAUCERS OF DEATH!"

NOW FOR THE FINAL BLOW... TO Wipe OUT AMERICA!!

WHEN MYSTERIOUS FLYING DISCS SWIRLED SWIFT CATASTROPHE FROM THE NATION'S SKIES, ALL AMERICA WAS THROWN INTO A NAMELESS TERROR. ONE MAN ALONE COULD SOLVE THE DILEMMA OF THE AERIAL SAUCERS OF DEATH... AND THAT MAN WAS CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT!

CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT

CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT IS KNOWN TO MANY AS ONE OF AMERICA'S GREAT HEROES. BUT ONLY A TRUSTED FEW KNOW THAT IT IS HE WHO FIGHTS THE BATTLE OF THE FLYING SAUCERS. HE HAS FIGHTED IN THE MOST DANGEROUS BATTLES OF THE FLYING SAUCERS. BUT NOW HE IS FIGHTING THE FLYING SAUCERS OF DEATH!

A NORTH DAKOTA FARM BOY TELLS A STORY.

WELL, I JUST FINISHED MILKING BESSIE, AND I LOOKED UP. THERE IT WAS, PLAIN AS DAY—A FLYING SAUCER!

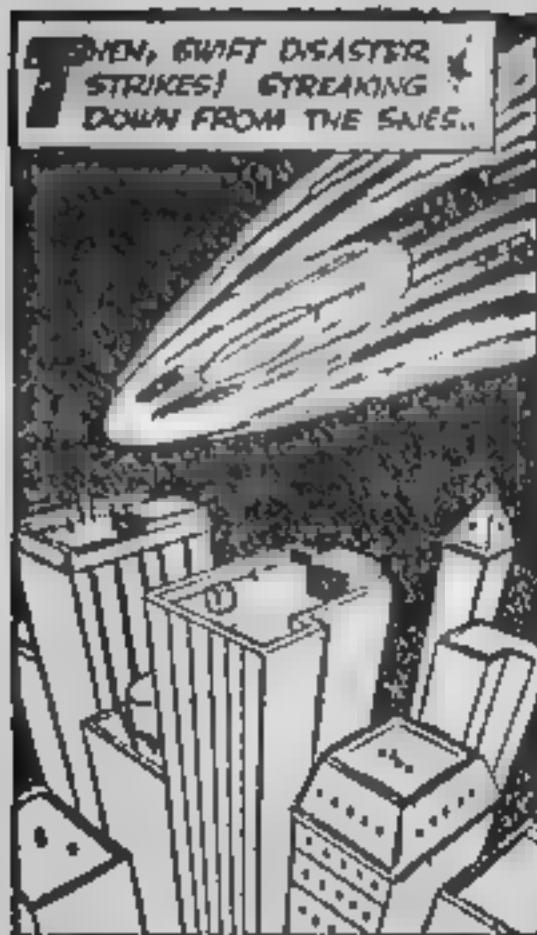
...AN AIRLINES PILOT...

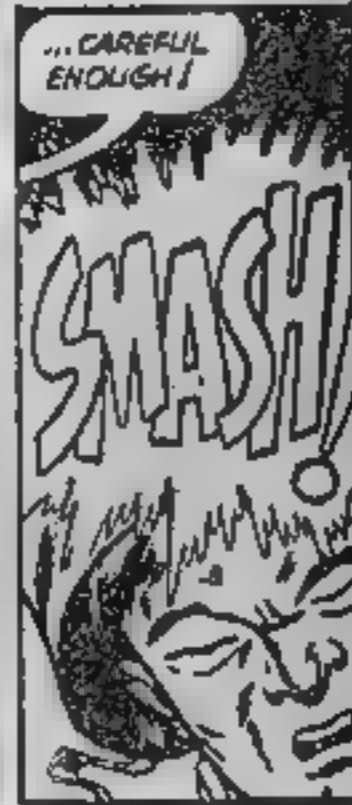
THERE I WAS AT THREE THOUSAND FEET... AND HERE THIS—THIS FLYING SAUCER WAS RIGHT ABOVE ME!

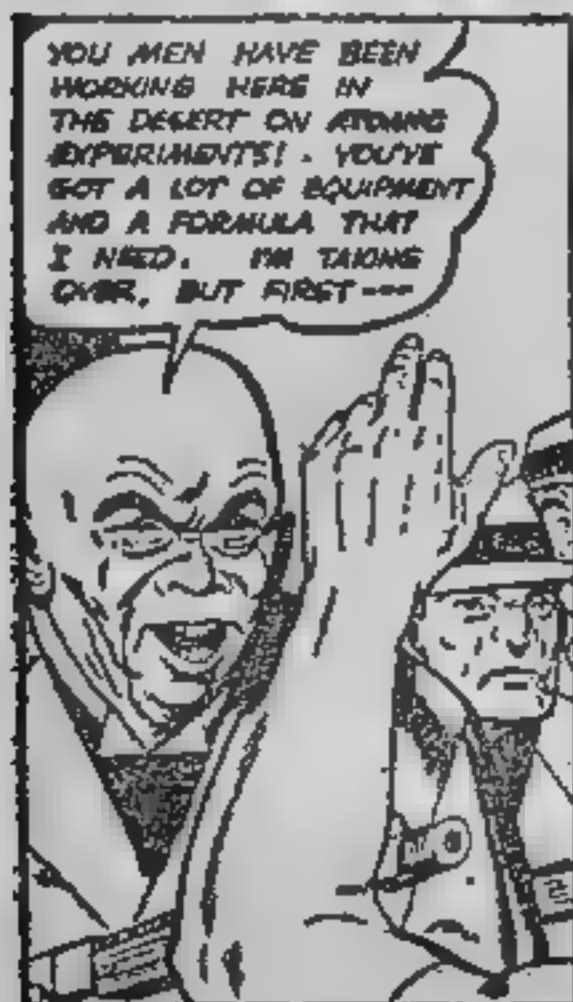
...AND A LOS ANGELES SCIENCE PROFESSOR.

ER... I HAVE NO SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATION, BUT IT SEEMS THAT IN CALIFORNIA, FLYING SAUCERS ARE TWICE AS BIG AS ELSEWHERE IN THE COUNTRY!

EVERYWHERE THE STORY IS THE SAME, AS HUNDREDS OF MYSTERIOUS WHIRLING DISCS ARE SEEN ABOVE THE NATION'S CITIES!



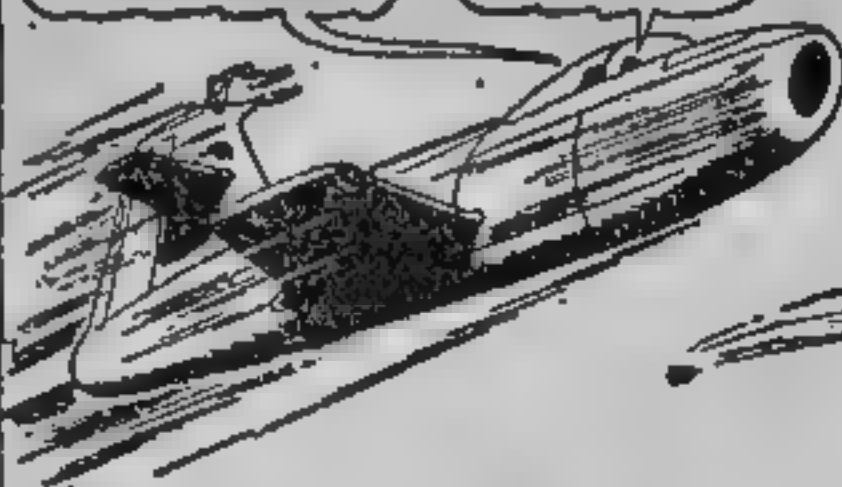




FOR HOURS THEY PATROL IN CAPTAIN ALBRIGHT'S SPECIALLY EQUIPPED SUPER-JET. THEN...

LOOK, CAP! THERE IN THE DISTANCE... IT'S A FLYING SAUCER!

GREAT SCOTT! YOU'RE RIGHT, ICKY! LET'S GET AFTER IT!



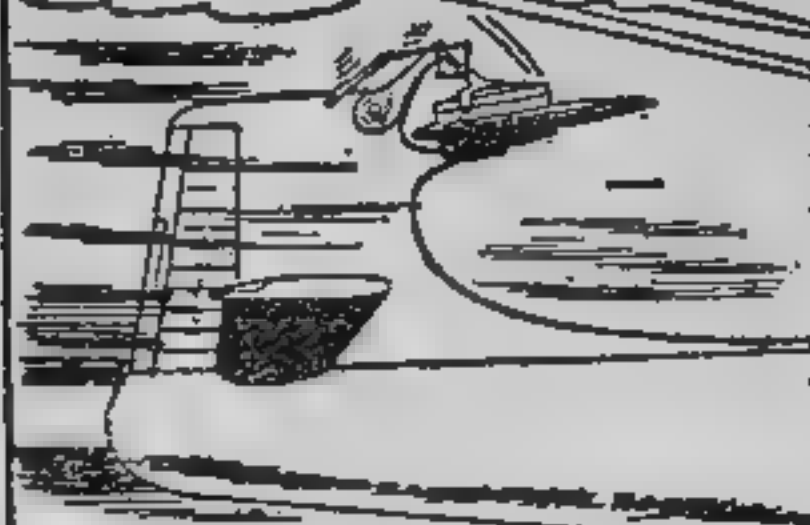
KEEP AS CLOSE TO THE SAUCER AS YOU CAN, ICKY, WHILE I TRY AND GRIP IT WITH THE SKY-HOOK I INVENTED FOR THAT PURPOSE!

RIGHT, CAP!



YOU DID IT, CAP! THE CUSHIONED DISC OF THE SKY-HOOK HAVE A FIRM HOLD ON THE FLYING SAUCER. YESSIR! WE'VE NABBED IT!

KEEP YOUR FINGERS CROSSED, ICKY. LET'S GO DOWN AND TRY TO FIND OUT WHAT MAKES THE THING TICK!



SOON, IN ALBRIGHT'S LABORATORY...



WHHMM! THIS DISC IS RADIOACTIVE AND HIGHLY EXPLOSIVE, ICKY, THE RESULT OF A NEW ATOMIC FORMULA! AND THIS INSTRUMENT BENEATH IS VERY INTERESTING!

WHAT IS IT, CAP?

A RADIO-CONTROLLING DEVICE!... SOMEBODY, SOMEWHERE IN THE COUNTRY HAS BEEN SENDING OUT THESE SAUCERS--AND CONTROLLING THEIR FLIGHT!



WHEN! THEN THAT EXPLOSION AT NEWPORT CITY...

...WAS DELIBERATE! ICKY, THE WAY FOR US TO FIND THE MADMAN BEHIND THESE DEVILISH DISCS IS FOR US TO RELEASE THIS ONE...



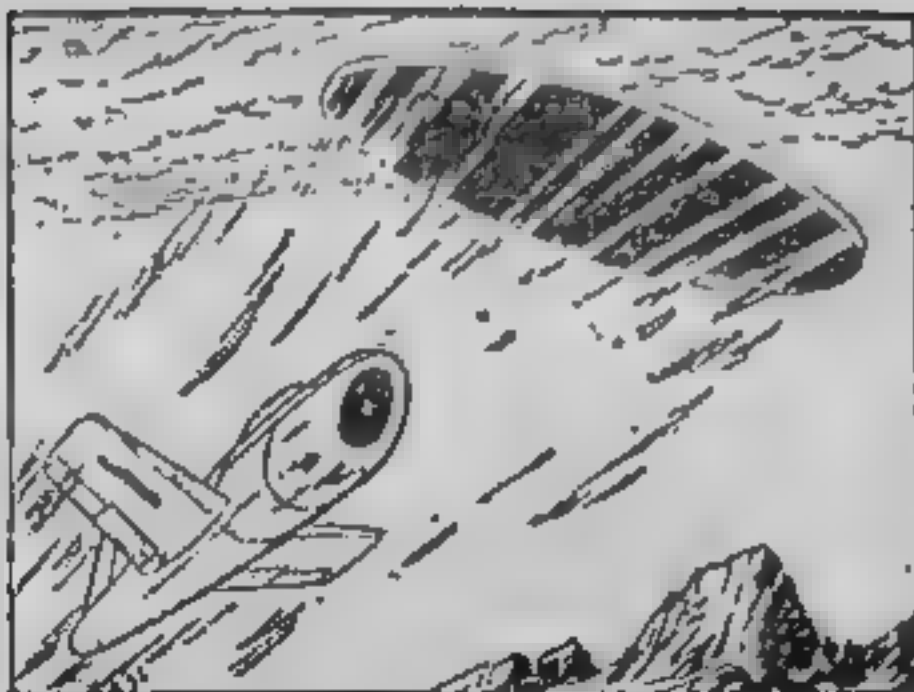
...AND FOR ME TO TRAIL IT BACK TO ITS CREATOR --- AS CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT!



ONCE RELEASED, THE FLYING SAUCER
ZOOMS OFF INTO THE AIR!...

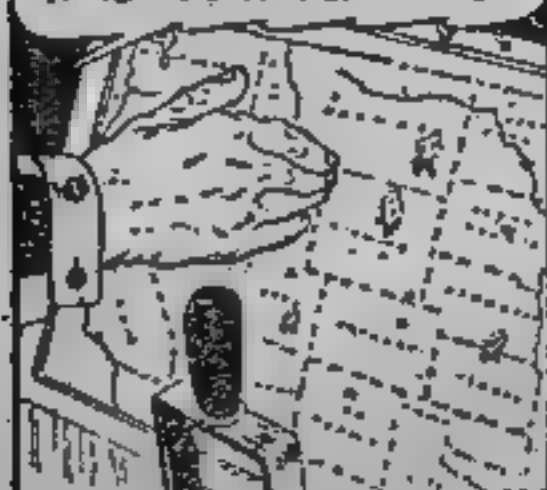


THERE IT GOES
—UNDER RADIO
CONTROL! I'LL
HAVE TO GET
AFTER IT IN
THE SUPER-JET
PLANE, BEFORE
IT DISAPPEARS
FROM SIGHT.



MEANWHILE, A VOICE
WE RECOGNIZE:

THINGS ARE GOING WELL,
KARL. WE'VE DEVELOPED
A HIGHLY MANEUVERABLE
WEAPON IN THE SAUCER—
AS THE NEWPORT CITY
EXPLOSION PROVES. SOON
WE'LL BE READY TO SELL
IT TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER!



LOOK, DR. OSMOSIS!
SAUCER X-49 IS
COMING IN NOW!

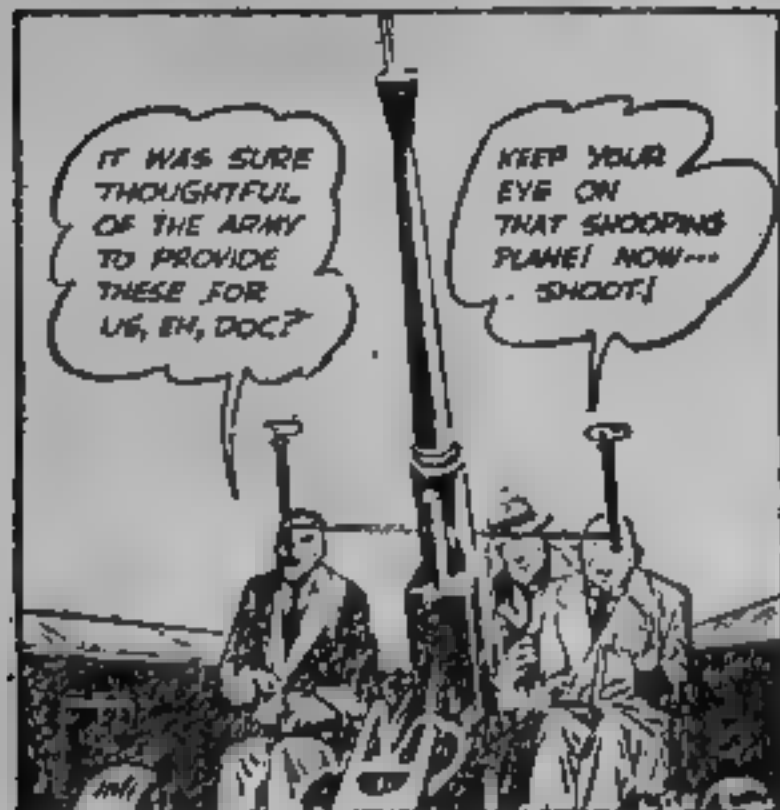


WAIT! THERE'S A
PLANE FOLLOWING
IT! QUICK, MAN AN
ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN!



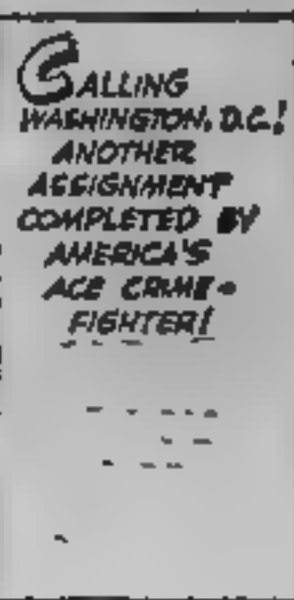
IT WAS SURE
THOUGHTFUL
OF THE ARMY
TO PROVIDE
THESE FOR
US, EH, DOC?

KEEP YOUR
EYE ON
THAT SHOOPING
PLANE! NOW—
SHOOT!









U.S. ARMY INSIGNIA AVIATION BADGES



COMMAND PILOT



SENIOR PILOT



OBSERVER



BOMBARDIER



PILOT



NAVIGATOR

DESTINY MOVES IN STRANGE WAYS! TO SOME, LIFE IS A CONTINUAL ROUND OF GOOD FORTUNE... TO OTHERS, A RECORD OF TRAGEDY! WHY? WHO CAN ACCOUNT FOR IT? LET'S JUST CALL IT---

A MATTER OF LUCK!



I'M VICTOR SHEPARD, READER---AND I NEVER WAS MUCH FOR BEING SUPERSTITIOUS! SUPPOSING WE START MY STORY AT THE SENDOFF PARTY MY FRIENDS GAVE ME IN 1942---THE NIGHT BEFORE I WAS BEING INDUCTED INTO THE AIR FORCE---

ALL WE CAN SAY IS SO LONG, VIC---AND HERE'S LUCK!

FELLAS, I HATE TO SAY IT ... BUT THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS LUCK! IT'S A MATTER OF LEARNING TO BE A GOOD FLYER AND KEEPING MY HEAD DOWN, THAT'S ALL!



THAT WAS MY PHILOSOPHY---DID IT WORK? WE'LL SEE! I BECAME AN AVIATOR, AND ONE DAY OVER FRANCE---I FORGOT TO KEEP MY HEAD DOWN!



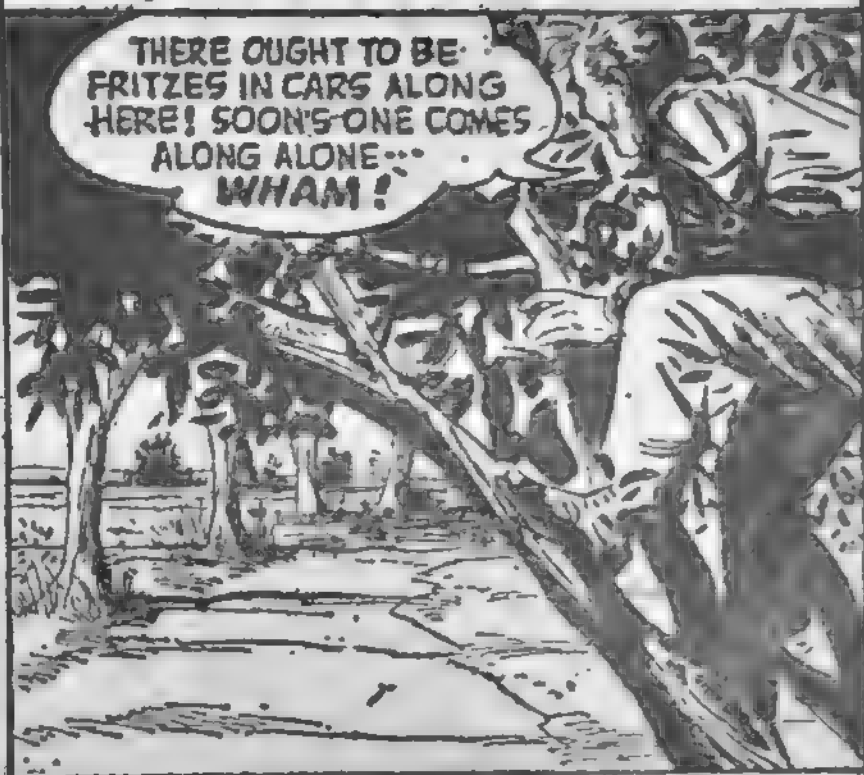
HOW I GOT OUT OF THAT ONE SAFELY, I'LL NEVER KNOW--BUT I DID! BUT I'D ESCAPED THE FRYING PAN ONLY TO LAND IN THE FIRE...

THIS WHOLE AREA'S ALIVE WITH NAZIS! THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY I CAN MAKE IT TO THE CHANNEL, AND THAT'S GET HOLD OF A GERMAN UNIFORM AND SOME SORT OF CONVEYANCE!



STEALTHILY, I MADE MY WAY TO A ROAD, WHERE...

THERE OUGHT TO BE FRITZES IN CARS ALONG HERE! SOON'S ONE COMES ALONG ALONE... WHAM!



I HADN'T WAITED LONG BEFORE I HEARD THE SOUND OF A MOTOR! DOWN THE ROAD TOWARDS ME CAME...

HERE GOES!



THUD!



THE DRIVERLESS CAR SHOT ONWARD! IT MUST HAVE BEEN CARRYING MUNITIONS, BECAUSE THE NEXT THING I HEARD WAS...



THAT SPELLED TROUBLE! THE SOUND OF THE EXPLOSION BROUGHT REINFORCEMENTS TO THE SCENE, AND I WAS CAUGHT COLD!



I SPENT THE REST OF THE WAR IN A NAZI PRISON CAMP! IT WAS RUGGED... LORD, HOW I SUFFERED...

I'M...SICK...STARVING! IF ONLY...I CAN LIVE TO GET OUT OF THIS...



NOW I WAS CONVINCED THAT I'D BEEN WRONG ABOUT LUCK! THERE WAS SUCH A THING, AND MY LUCK HAD BEEN BAD--BAD BECAUSE OF A MAN WHOSE FACE NEVER LEFT MY MIND! EACH NIGHT, I'D DREAM ABOUT IT--



BUT DESPITE MY SUFFERING, I LIVED, AND FINALLY CAME THE DAY WHEN THE WAR ENDED, AND I RETURNED TO AMERICA! THIS TIME, MY FRIENDS GAVE ME A WELCOME HOME PARTY--

I GUESS GOOD OLD VIC SURE WAS RIGHT ABOUT WHAT HE SAID WHEN WE GAVE HIM HIS SENDOFF! IT WASN'T A MATTER OF LUCK AT ALL THAT SAW HIM THROUGH--HE JUST KNEW ENOUGH TO KEEP HIS HEAD DOWN!

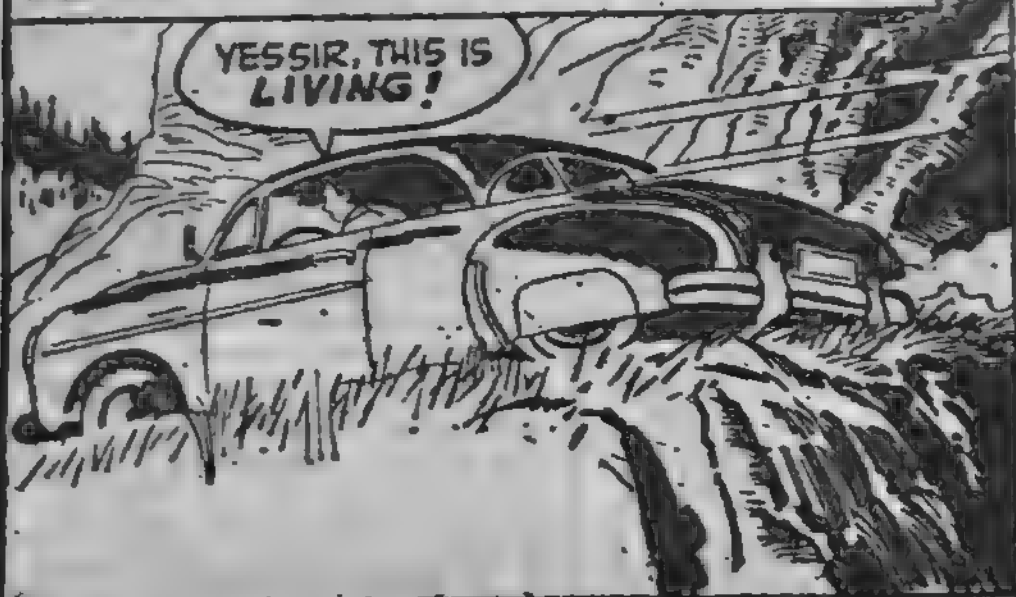


SO LET'S NOT TALK ABOUT LUCK--HE CAME BACK IN ONE PIECE BECAUSE HE WAS SMART!

NO USE TELLING THEM I'VE CHANGED--THAT I BELIEVE IN LUCK NOW! ESPECIALLY **BAD LUCK**! ---THE KIND THAT GERMAN SOLDIER WITH THE SCARRED FACE BROUGHT ME!



BY THE FOLLOWING YEAR, HOWEVER, I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN MY BAD LUCK BOY! I'D BOUGHT A BRAND NEW CAR, AND WAS SPEEDING THROUGH THE ROCKIES ON A VACATION TRIP--



PERHAPS DYING WOULD HAVE BEEN THE BETTER WORD! FOR NEXT MOMENT, I HAD ROUNDED A STEEP CURVE--AND DEADLY DANGER LOOMED!



NEXT MOMENT CAME A RENDING IMPACT--AND IN THAT SPLIT SECOND, I SAW THE DRIVER CLEARLY! MY SENSES REELED, BECAUSE--

IT'S HIM--THE SCAR-FACED NAZI WHO GOT ME CAPTURED!

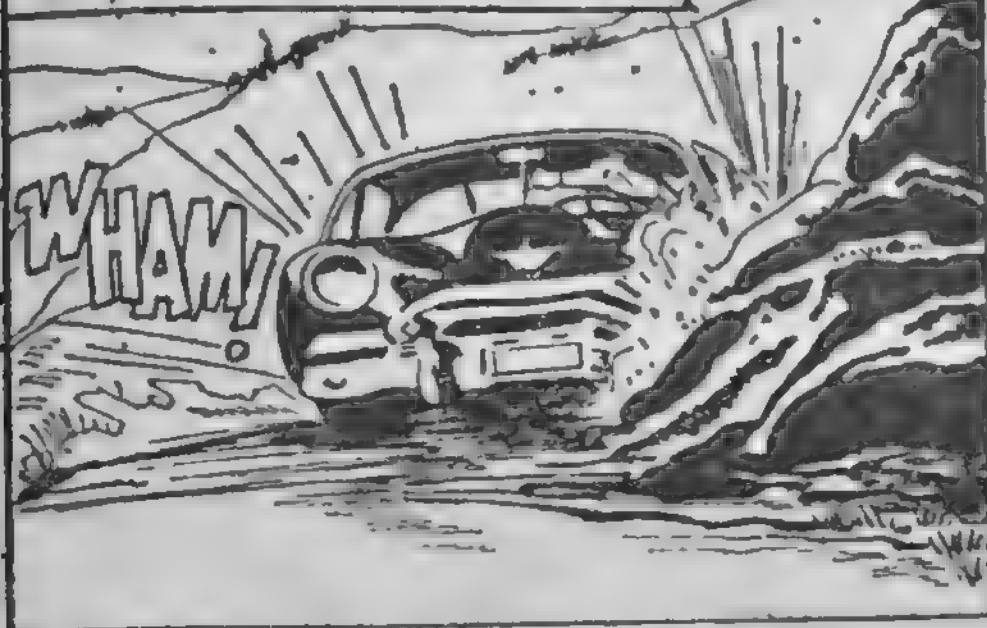


I WAS OUT OF CONTROL NOW! I DON'T KNOW HOW I MANAGED TO MAKE THE NEXT CURVE, BUT I DID--

GOT TO--STOP HER--



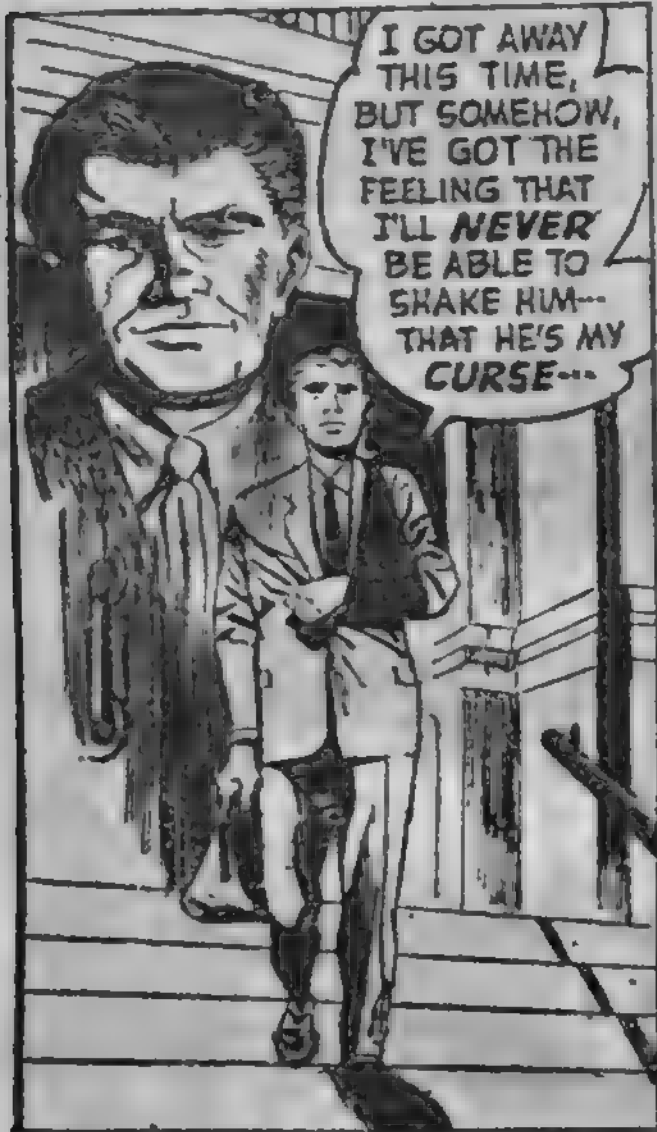
THAT ANOTHER CURVE LOOMED UP DIZZILY! I KNEW I COULDN'T MAKE THAT ONE, AND I DIDN'T!



IT WAS A BAD WRECK--AND I CAME TO IN THE HOSPITAL--



HE CAUSED THAT ACCIDENT--AND TO THINK THAT HE DIDN'T EVEN STOP! HE'S MY NEMESIS, MY BAD LUCK--**BACK AGAIN!** IT'S ALMOST AS IF--HE'S FOUND MY TRAIL NOW, AND IS AFTER ME!



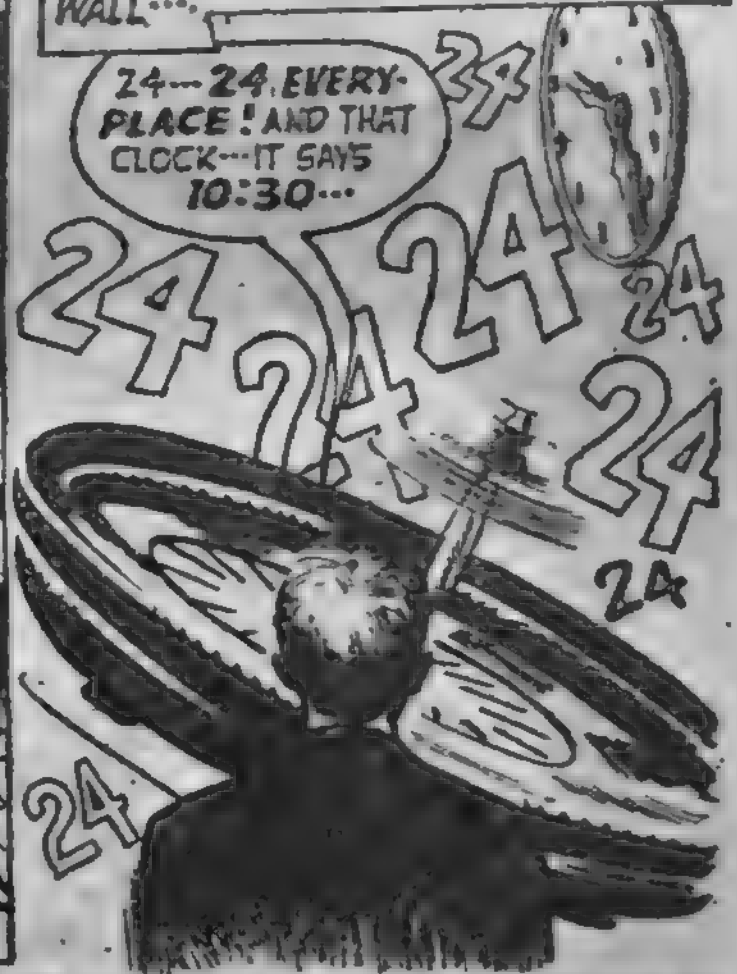
I GOT AWAY THIS TIME, BUT SOMEHOW, I'VE GOT THE FEELING THAT I'LL **NEVER** BE ABLE TO SHAKE HIM--THAT HE'S MY **CURSE**--

BUT TIME PASSED, AND GRADUALLY, THE BURDEN OF MY FEAR LIGHTENED! THEN, IN LAS VEGAS, WHERE I'D COME ON BUSINESS--I HAD A STRANGE DREAM--



I SAW THE SPINNING ROULETTE WHEEL GROW LARGER, LARGER! AND THEN, SUDDENLY, I SAW A NUMBER, WRITTEN EVERYWHERE--AND A CLOCK ON THE WALL--

24--24, EVERY-PLACE! AND THAT CLOCK--IT SAYS 10:30--



THAT WASN'T 'JUST A DREAM--IT WAS A STRONGER HUNCH THAN I'VE EVER HAD BEFORE! I CAN FEEL IT--**NUMBER 24 IS GOING TO WIN AT THE ROULETTE TABLE TOMORROW NIGHT AT 10:30!**



SO THE NEXT NIGHT--AS 10:30 NEARED--

\$10,000 WORTH OF CHIPS! ISN'T THAT KIND OF HIGH?

WHY WORRY? I CAN'T LOSE!



IT WAS TIME! AT THE ROULETTE TABLE, I WAS MOVING MY CHIPS TOWARDS NO. 24 WHEN ANOTHER PLAYER CROWDED ME--

EASY, WILL YOU?

SORRY!

WELL, WATCH IT, CAN'T YOU? DON'T YOU SEE I'M TRYING TO GET MY BET DOWN?

SO AM I!

MY BREATH WAS COMING FAST AS I WATCHED THE WHEEL SPIN! I WAS SURE I WAS GOING TO WIN--BUT IT WAS A LOT OF MONEY FOR ME TO BET--

COME ON, 24!

BUT WHAT HAD HAPPENED? WHY WASN'T THE CROUPIER PUSHING MY WINNINGS TOWARDS ME?

I'M SORRY, SIR! MAYBE YOU MEANT TO PUT YOUR BET ON 24, BUT SOMETHING MUST HAVE DISTRACTED YOU! YOU PLACED YOUR CHIPS ON THE SQUARE NEXT TO 24!

YOU MEAN--I --I DIDN'T WIN? I--LOST?

NO. 24 WINS!

YEE-OWWW! I DID IT! I DID IT!

JUST THEN, I FELT A GAZE RIVETED ON ME-- SEEMING ALMOST TO BURN INTO ME! I TURNED --ONLY TO SEE--

HIM AGAIN--MY NEMESIS! HE--HE'S THE ONE WHO PUSHED MY ARM JUST WHEN I WAS ABOUT TO PUT MY BET ON 24! HE'S STRUCK AT ME AGAIN, CURSE HIM!

HE WAS MY BAD LUCK--I COULDN'T GET HIS FACE OUT OF MY MIND NOW!

I HATE HIM--LORD, HOW I HATE HIM!

IT WAS DURING THE FOLLOWING
AUTUMN THAT--

NOTHING AS
GOOD AS A
GOOD RODEO!
GUESS I'LL
TAKE IT IN!

MIAMI
**RODEO
TONIGHT**



YES, IT WAS A GOOD SHOW--AND I ENJOYED IT HUGELY--



AND THEN--JUST AS I LEAPED TO MY
FEET TO CHEER A SPECTACULAR BULL
RIDE--

ATTABOY! OH-OH;
THERE HE GOES!



--I FELT IT AGAIN--THAT
SENSATION THAT SOMEONE
WAS STARING AT ME! EVEN
AS I TURNED SLOWLY, I KNEW
WHAT I WAS GOING TO SEE--

IT'S...
HIM...



AS HIS EYES CAUGHT MINE, HE LEAPED
TO HIS FEET--AND SUDDENLY--

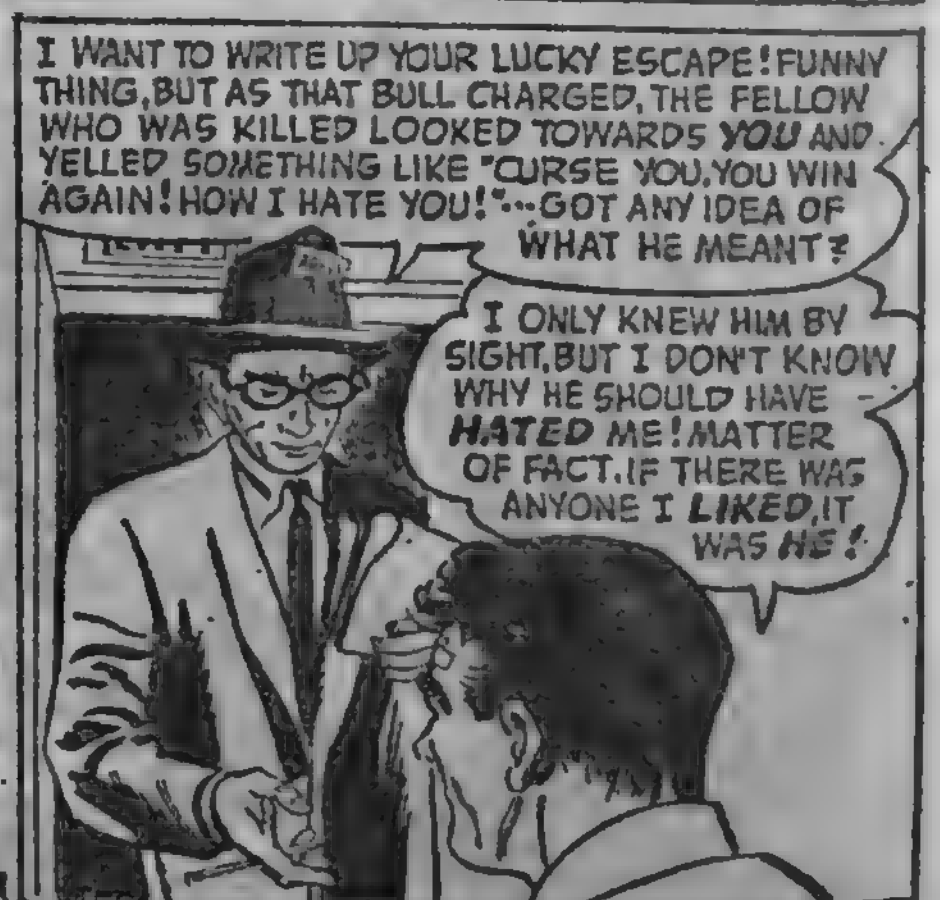
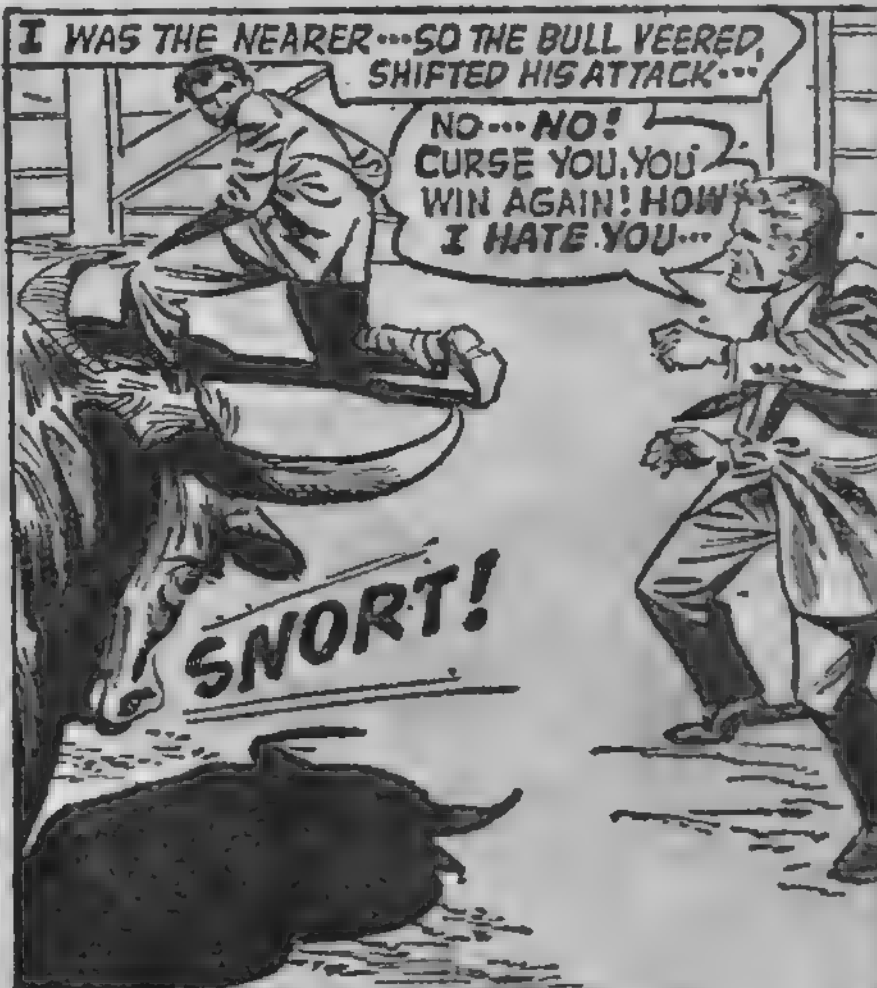
LOOK
OUT!



SNORT!

A BROAD WENT UP FROM THE ARENA! THE RIDERLESS
BRAHMA BULL HAD SPOTTED HIM! IT WAS CHARGING,
A TON OF DEADLY FURY--





REALLY? JUST WHY DID YOU LIKE HIM?

LET ME TELL YOU! THE FIRST TIME I EVER SAW HIM WAS DURING THE WAR, WHEN HE LEAPED ON ME FROM HIDING! HE WAS AN AVIATOR WHO'D BEEN SHOT DOWN... I GUESS HE WANTED MY UNIFORM AND CAR TO HELP HIM ESCAPE...



WE FELL OUT OF THAT CAR, FIGHTING, AND IT WENT ON BY ITSELF ALONG THE ROAD---RIGHT ONTO A MINE WHICH HAD BEEN PLANTED BY THE FRENCH UNDERGROUND! HE DIDN'T MEAN IT... BUT HE SAVED MY LIFE!"



GO ON! WHEN WAS THE NEXT TIME YOU RAN INTO HIM?

A FEW YEARS BACK, WHEN I WAS DRIVING THROUGH THE ROCKIES! TWO STATE TROOPERS HAD COMMANDEERED MY CAR...

OUR CAR BROKE DOWN JUST AS WE WERE CHASING SOME ESCAPED PRISONERS! THEY'RE TOO DANGEROUS TO BE ALLOWED AT LARGE, SO STEP ON IT!



IT WAS DANGEROUS, SPEEDING OVER THOSE CURVING MOUNTAIN ROADS, BUT THERE WAS NO WAY OUT... I HAD TO DO IT...

FASTER! AND REMEMBER... WE'RE NOT STOPPING FOR ANYTHING!



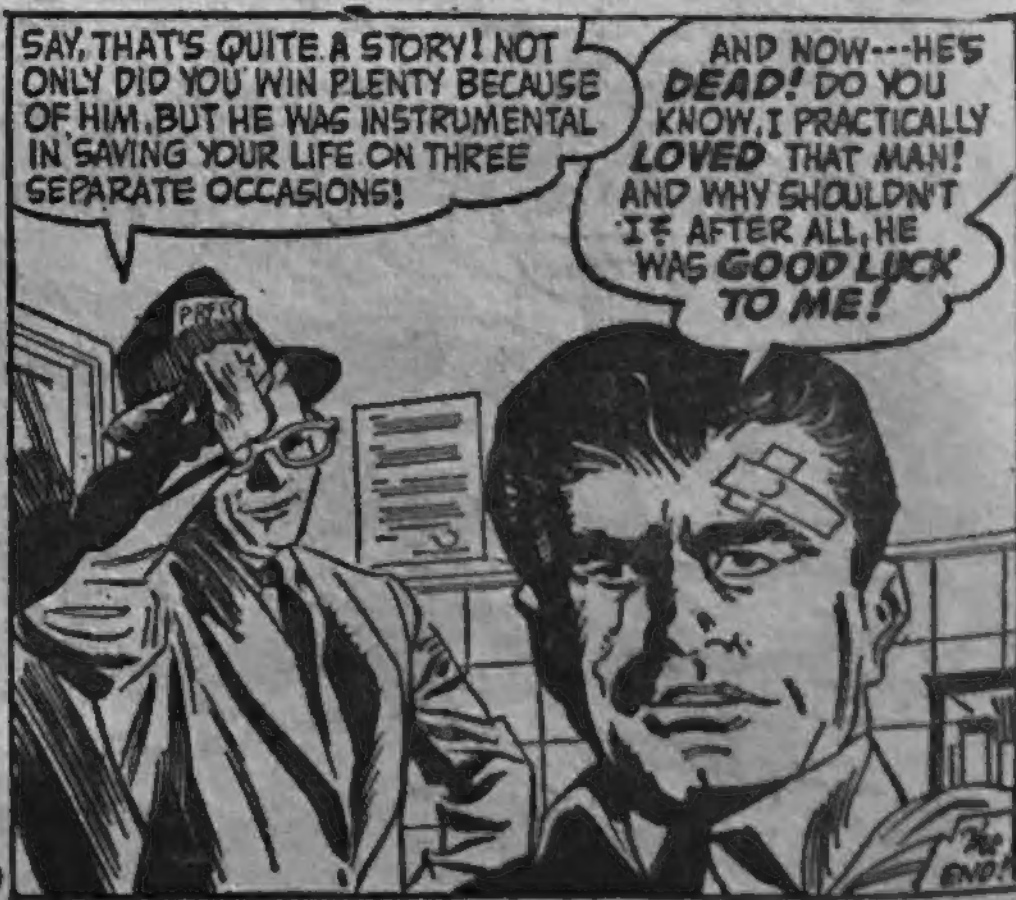
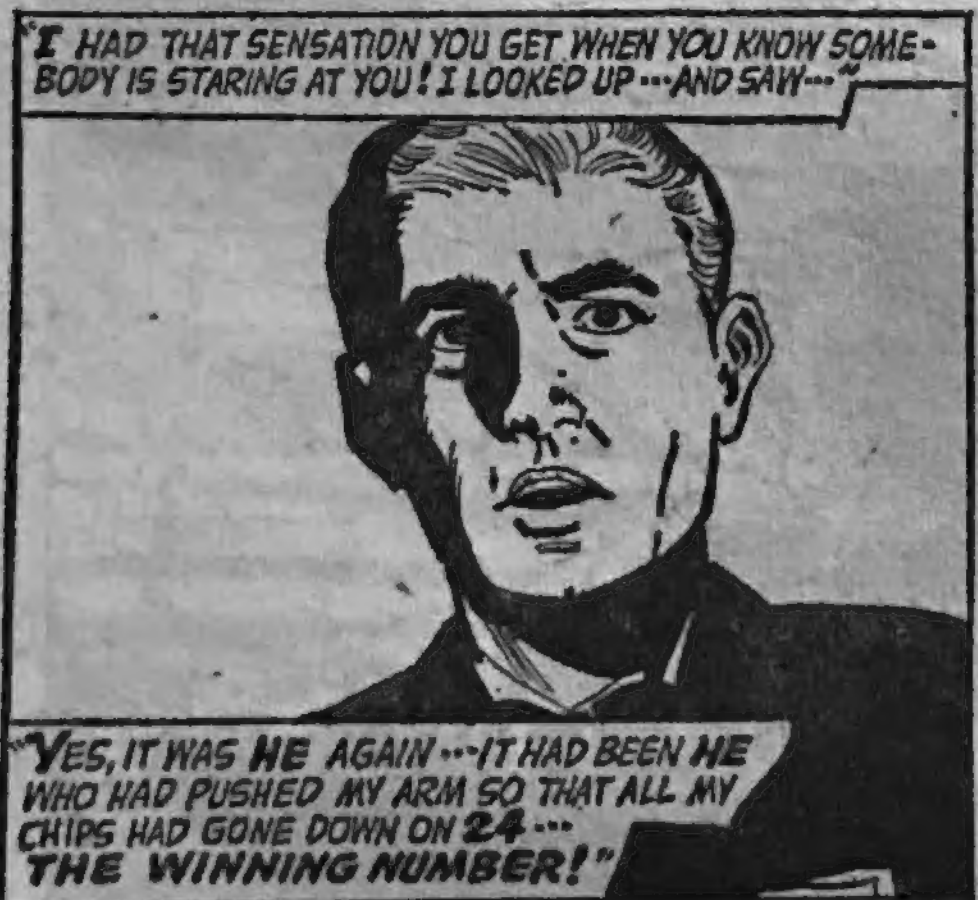
"ROUNDING A SHARP TURN, WE WENT INTO A TERRIBLE SKID! AS THE REAR OF THE CAR SLEWED AROUND, BLOCKING THE ROAD, I SAW THAT WE WERE SLIDING TOWARDS THE EDGE... AND NOTHING COULD STOP US!"

WE'RE GOING TO... BE KILLED...



"AND THEN, FROM AROUND THE NEXT CURVE, A CAR SHOT TOWARDS US..."





The ROAD from THE PAST



LOST IN THE SANDY WASTES OF NORTH AFRICA, LEGIONNAIRE RAOUL MORET WAS NEAR DEATH FROM EXHAUSTION WHEN HE STUMBLED UPON THE ROAD...

I... I DON'T KNOW WHERE IT LEADS TO, BUT MAYBE I'LL FIND WATER IF I FOLLOW THIS OLD ROAD!



SUDDENLY, INEXPLICABLY, HE FOUND HIMSELF MARCHING AMONG MEN DRESSED IN STRANGE APPAREL...

I AM RAOUL MORET OF THE FOREIGN LEGION. IN HEAVEN'S NAME, WHO ARE YOU AND THE REST OF THESE MEN?

WE TOO ARE LEGIONNAIRES, MY FRIEND.



THOUGH PUZZLED, RAOUL HAD NO STRENGTH TO INVESTIGATE FURTHER. HE WAS ONLY TOO GLAD FOR THE COMPANY OF THE STRANGERS...

YOU LOOK THIRSTY, SOLDIER. HERE, HAVE SOME OF THIS WINE FROM MY GOAT-SKIN.

THANK YOU...



AFTER TWO DAYS OF MARCHING, RAOUL FOUND HIMSELF NEAR THE GREAT OASIS OF SIDI BARAN. BUT AS HE PAUSED ON THE ROAD SUDDENLY...

THOSE MEN... THE ROAD... THEY'RE DISAPPEARING BEFORE MY VERY EYES! WAS IT ALL A MIRAGE?



BUT WHEN RAOUL REPORTED HIS STORY TO THE AUTHORITIES...

WELL, THEY SAY SIDI BARAN WAS ONCE A ROMAN OUTPOST, BUT I'M STILL CERTAIN THAT WHAT YOU SAW WAS NOTHING BUT AN HALLUCINATION BROUGHT ON BY EXHAUSTION.



...BUT HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN FINDING MY WAY HERE ACROSS SO MANY MILES OF DESERT? AND THIS ANCIENT ROMAN VESSEL FILLED WITH WINE...

THAT MAY BE, CAPTAIN...

YOU MAY BE RIGHT, RAOUL. PERHAPS THERE ARE SOME THINGS IN THIS WORLD FOR WHICH THERE IS NO EXPLANATION!



The END!

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